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The thesis is an in-depth study of the official American justifi- fication for intervention in Russia from 1918-1920, based on an analysis of State Department dispatches on Russia from 1917 to 1920. The majority of the evidence comes from primary sources. Subject treatment provides background on POW's during WWI, traces the evo- lution of the war prisoner threat, and analyzes the POW problem on American relations with Russia during WWI and after the Allied		

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armistice with the Central Powers.

The State Department messages and the volume of traffic provide an accurate indication of the influence which the POW problem had on American policy formulation towards Russia and the relationship between policy and critical international events. Message analysis provides insight into the roles of key American officials in Russian policy development. The POW threat was the basis for American intervention and continued to be the justification for U.S. presence in Russia until 1920.

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THE POW PROBLEM IN RUSSIA: JUSTIFICATION
FOR ALLIED INTERVENTION, 1918-1920

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army
Command and General Staff College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the individual student author and do not necessarily represent the views of either the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

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ABSTRACT

In September 1918, the United States intervened in Russia with 20,000 soldiers as part of Allied expeditions in north Russia and Siberia. U.S. officials justified the American military intervention as being necessary to assist the evacuation of the Czech Army from Russia. In this movement to the western front, the Czechs had been attacked by armed German and Austrian prisoners of war. The decision to intervene was based on confusing and inaccurate field reports which reinforced strongly-held perceptions about the new Bolshevik government. The rationalization of a threat from thousands of released war prisoners, and the image of the Bolsheviks as German agents, were typical of American attitudes towards Russia from the eve of the Bolshevik revolution to the armistice ending World War One.

American policy towards Russia prior to the Bolshevik takeover reflected governmental attitudes which considered the nation a traditional backwater area. After the Bolshevik revolution, American policy reacted to developments in Russia and to other major events in the international arena. Perceptions and attitudes in Washington were greatly influenced by the diplomatic reports received from the field posts. A study of the prisoner of war issue in the diplomatic message traffic is complicated by the complexity of the chaotic Russian situation from 1917 to 1920. Equally chaotic was the international wartime environment. Allied tendencies to identify the Bolshevik regime with that of the Central Powers, and the preferential treatment provided to certain POW groups by the Allies, further complicated the situation.

Nevertheless, the prisoner threat was the issue which most

influenced the American decision to intervene in Russia. The two million POW's in Russia represented a definite threat to the Allied Powers for several reasons: they were a manpower pool from which units already on the fronts could be reinforced; they were capable of seizing control of the Trans-Siberian Railway, the key to Czech evacuation and counterrevolutionary resupply; they were capable of blocking the emigration of the Czechs, badly-needed reinforcements for the Allies on the western front; they were a threat to the stockpiled war materials at Murmansk, Archangel, and Vladivostok; they were capable of creating further chaos in the internal affairs of Russia; and they could be used by the Bolshheviks to form a viable Red Army capable of eliminating the counterrevolutionaries and intervening Allied forces.

The objectives of this study are: to provide background on the war prisoners during the World War; to trace the evolution of the war prisoner threat; and to analyze the effect of the prisoner of war problem on America's relations with Russia during the war and after the Allied armistice with the Central Powers. The study is organized chronologically and is based on the American diplomatic traffic in Russia from 1917 to 1920. The majority of evidence cited comes from primary sources. The messages and the volume of traffic provide an accurate indication of the influence which the prisoner of war problem had on formulation of America's policy towards Russia; they also show the relationship between policy and critical international events. Analysis of the messages provides insight into the role of key American officials in the development of Russian policy. Finally, the messages reflect rather graphically the confusion of the period and the problems which faced the policymakers of the United States. These statesmen dealt with an issue seemingly minor

at the time, but which was destined to affect the future of American-Russian relations to the present day.

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INTRODUCTION

In early September, 1918, the United States intervened in Russia with 20,000 American soldiers as part of two Allied expeditions in north Russia and Siberia. Elements of the American Expeditionary Forces to Russia remained in that country until early 1920, long after the armistice was signed. At Vladivostok, Siberia, General William S. Graves commanded three American infantry regiments and a large support element. Graves' total military force numbered 15,000 soldiers. In north Russia at Murmansk and Archangel, the American infantry regiment with its support personnel served under the joint Allied command of the British. Lieutenant Colonel George E. Stewart was the nominal commander of the 5,100 American soldiers under the British-led expeditionary force. American forces were introduced as part of the Allied intervention in Russia to assist the evacuation of the Czech Army which was being threatened by armed German and Austrian prisoners of war. Noninterference in the internal affairs of Russia was a basic tenet of the American agreement to intervene as part of an Allied effort.

American policy towards Russia during the critical year between the Bolshevik revolution and the end of World War One was basically a reactive one to current developments in Russia and in the international arena. American perceptions and attitudes were greatly influenced by diplomatic reports from the field. The basis for American intervention in Russia is no exception. At the time the most publicized justification by the United States for the landing of American soldiers in Russia was "to aid the Czecho-Slovaks against German and Austrian prisoners."¹

There are several scholarly accounts of the Allied intervention in general, and some specific works which deal with the Siberian phase in particular, but none of them do more than touch upon the prisoner of war issue as the primary reason for America's decision to intervene in Russia.

An historiographic background survey of the major works on the American intervention is essential to lend proper perspective to this study. My purpose is not to refute the major theses of established United States diplomatic historians, but to demonstrate that the official justification that has been most overlooked, the prisoners of war in Russia, is the basis for the decision to intervene, while all others merely refer to the issue. In some cases blatant misinterpretations are pointed out to clarify my contention that the prisoner of war problem was the primary cause for America's decision to intervene in Russia as part of the Allied plan.

Leonid I. Strakhovsky was the first of many authors to deal with the Allied intervention in Russia.² Strakhovsky dealt primarily with the north Russian intervention. His contention was that the basic reasons for American intervention were to support the counterrevolutionaries against the Bolsheviks, to protect the stockpiled war materials in the Russian seaports, and to establish another front against the Central Powers. Strakhovsky's participation in the intervention lends support to his arguments. His pioneer efforts in the 1930's and 1940's to explain the Russian intervention are now quite dated because relevant archives have been opened and many of the personalities directly involved in the policy towards Russia have published memoirs and accounts of the intervention.

During the 1950's, several prominent works dealing with the

Intervention in Russia were published. William A. Williams, considered a New Left historian today, provided an overview of Russian-American relations from 1781 to 1947.³ Williams contends that America's primary reason for intervention was its policy of anti-Communism and determination to overthrow the Bolshevik regime. He sees American intervention as the beginning of this attitude and the first physical attempt to remove the Communist threat. Williams is partial to Colonel Raymond Robins, head of the American Red Cross Mission to Russia, 1917-1918, and unofficial liaison to the Bolshevik government during the non-recognition period. His bias towards Robins and his role as intermediary with the Bolsheviks leads Williams to distort the issues underlying the prisoner of war problem as the key factor in the U.S. decision to intervene.

In their 1950's era treatments, William A. White, James W. Morley, and Betty M. Unterberger dealt specifically with the Siberian intervention.⁴ These authors highlight America's anti-Japanese policy, Allied pressures upon the United States to intervene, and the idea that the intervention was intended to be an involvement in the internal affairs of Russia. White, Morley, and Unterberger treat the prisoner of war problem as a peripheral issue. They do provide excellent treatment of the problem by demonstrating the confusion and uncertainty of the policy makers and policy implementers in dealing with the Russian issue before, during, and after intervention. All are very scholarly works relying on the archives available at the time.

Two outstanding works which dealt with the formulation and implementation of American and British policy towards Russia during the period 1917-1921 were published during the 1960 era. George F. Kennan, former Ambassador to the Soviet Union, wrote a two-volume work which is

considered to be the classic study of Soviet-American relations from 1917 to 1920.⁵ Kennan centered his analysis of intervention on the Czech problem and humanitarian motives. He deals with the prisoner of war problem more than any other author to date, but discounts its importance, calling it a secondary aspect of the overall motive, namely, active support of the Czech cause in Russia. Richard H. Ullman authored a companion series on Anglo-Soviet relations, extending his coverage through 1921.⁶ British intervention was directly tied to the overall war effort and had a certain relation to postwar economic recovery. Ullman supports the Kennan thesis and likewise places the prisoner of war issue in a subordinate role. His three volumes emphasize the heavy pressure applied on President Woodrow Wilson and his principal advisors to support the "Allied" idea of intervention.

Christopher Lasch, another American New Left historian, wrote about the role of the American liberals and their relationship to Russian policy formulation during the war years of 1917 and 1918. His book was published in 1962.⁷ Lasch contends that the threat posed by the armed prisoners of war to justify American intervention was deliberately misrepresented to cover America's desire to support the counterrevolutionaries in Russia. The Czech uprising against the Bolsheviks provided the humanitarian motive necessary to expand the justifications for American intervention.

The publications of this decade are perhaps more specific and authoritative. The primary reason for this is the recent opening of relevant archives by the governments of most former Allies. The revelations from research in these new sources have led to theories of intervention based on economic reasons, the conflict of personalities within

the various Allied governments, and the secret postwar agreements which predate the Versailles Conference.⁸ Despite the opening of the files, the prisoner of war issue remains virtually unexplored.

A study of the prisoner of war issue is complicated by the complexity of the chaotic Russian situation from 1917 to 1920. The viewpoints and objectives of each of the major Allied nations during the war and afterwards must be understood in light of the international situation. The prisoner issue is complicated by the divergent attitudes of the Allies and the Central Powers toward certain national prisoner groups and the tendency by several nations to tie the Bolshevik regime with that of the Central Powers.

National attitudes and policies differed considerably amongst the Allies and were affected by wartime postwar agreements and colonial empires. The British were the most opportunistic of the Allies regarding relations with Russia. They sought to protect their worldwide colonial empire and based many of their attitudes upon the necessity to solve immediate war requirements. The French were positioned with their backs to the wall on the western front. Areas of France were occupied by the Germans. The offensives of 1918 on the western front brought the Germans to within a hundred miles of Paris. France's goals were based upon the exigencies of the situation at home and in Russia. French imperialist interests in the Pacific had been guaranteed by the Japanese entry into the war. Japan's interests were oriented toward protection of newly conquered German colonial holdings, further expansion of spheres of interest in Chinese Manchuria and Siberia, and continued monopolization of Pacific commerce. Her desire to establish another front for the Allies was predicated on the fact that Siberia was both a war prisoner

stronghold and a treasurehouse of raw materials essential for the developing Japanese industries.

The Czechs were former Russian prisoners of war recruited initially by the Czarist Russians to fight the Central Powers and then sponsored by the French to continue the fight on the western front after Russian withdrawal from the war. The Czechs were most interested in gaining support for national independence. The dilemma of the Czech Legion in Russia in reaching Europe helped to achieve this goal. They did not support the counterrevolutionaries as suspected by the Bolsheviks, but did help the Allies in other ways: by controlling the Trans-Siberian Railway, by preventing the repatriation of the war prisoners, and by supporting liberal governments in their areas of operation while hindering local Bolshevik attempts to establish control.

American attitudes and policy must be considered separately. Unlike her European Allies, the United States had entered the war late. American policy towards Russia after the Bolshevik takeover was basically to "do nothing." However, the State Department and its overseas diplomats tended to be anti-Bolshevik in their sentiments, to favor support of the various counterrevolutionary groups in Russia, and later, to support military intervention in Russia. The United States was a reluctant supporter of the Allied plans to intervene in Russia. Her attitude towards the prisoners was one of interest, but not the same degree of interest as when she handled prisoner of war affairs as a neutral nation. Because Russia was a peripheral problem for the United States, Russian-American relations were weak and most often dictated by the field diplomats.

My premise is that the prisoner of war issue was the primary reason for the American participation in the Allied intervention in Russia.

The attitude of the American diplomats in the field was basically anti-Bolshevik. State Department attitudes were influenced greatly by reports received from its Russian, Chinese, and Japanese diplomatic posts. In American eyes, the Bolshevik regime had been tied closely to that of the Central Powers, especially after the signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Combining the Russian problem with the war against Germany simplified the direction of American war efforts against a single enemy. When Bolsheviks recruited prisoners of war under the guise of Internationalists, the United States easily saw prisoners of war armed to assist the Central Powers in the prosecution of the war. The anti-Bolshevik feeling in official State Department circles made this thesis easier to accept. One finds in American officialdom a definite lack of perception or interest in the goals and basic tenets of the new Russian regime. The official "do nothing" policy reinforced the idea that little could be gained by attempting to understand the Russian problem or the Bolsheviks' approach to its solution. Personality conflicts between members of the Executive branch and the State Department further hampered attempts by both to evaluate objectively the situation.

The American decision to intervene reduced Allied pressure for earlier, larger troop commitments during a period of mobilization in the United States. The decision to support Allied intervention served to represent American support of Allied efforts and as a quid pro quo to gain later Allied support of an international peacekeeping body, the League of Nations. The prisoner of war problem masked other motives: control of the Trans-Siberian Railway, security of the stockpiled war materials in Russia, and control of Japan's expansionist efforts in the Far East. In idealistic terms, the troop intervention was to be a "sterile action"

designed to assist the Russian people and guaranteed not to interfere in the internal problems of Russia while assisting the Czech evacuation from Russia.

American diplomats in Russia were very familiar with the prisoner of war issue, having handled the humanitarian aspects of it as a neutral nation for several years. This fact is often overlooked. Prior involvement before the United States entered the war might explain the tendency of American diplomats abroad to take the importance of the prisoner issue for granted. It would also account for the substantial lack of message traffic on the subject until the Russian-German armistice talks began. The Allies had made extensive use of the war prisoner resources before the Russian-German armistice. They exploited the Czech desire for national independence to organize combat units to serve on the western front. However, for the Central Powers to capitalize upon this hitherto untapped source of manpower was unacceptable. Hence, the cries of alarm when the Germans began to organize the war prisoners for repatriation and the Bolsheviks recruited and armed them as Internationalists.

To support this thesis I have analyzed and quantified State Department communications on Russia which deal with the prisoner of war issue from November, 1917, through February, 1920. The message traffic identifies the officials who exerted the greatest influence on United States policy and reveals the development of Russian-American relations.

The monthly ebb and flow of the message traffic shows a significant correlation to the major international events of the period. I have organized the message traffic chronologically around these major events and periods: the period before the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk; the period after the treaty is signed to the German summer offensives on

the western front; the summer offensives and the American decision to intervene; and the intervention period. Charts which depict the message traffic buildup, and maps which locate the prisoner of war camps and internationalist unit centers, are designed to assist the reader in following the development of American policy towards Russia and in relating the significance of messages by geographical location. The appendices provide several of the pertinent documents related to the prisoner of war issue.

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REVOLUTION TO TREATY TALKS

To the world the March Revolution of 1917 signalled the collapse of Czarism in Russia. Unfortunately the event was more a "sloughing off of a diseased member than a healthy amputation."¹ The newly established Provisional Government with its Western-oriented regime was first recognized by the United States, and then the other Allies followed the example. Relations between Russia and the United States had traditionally been a diplomatic backwater. There had been official contacts, periods of friendship and friction, but the past record was basically barren. The Russians could only hope for a better future.² Throughout its brief life the democratic government was essentially foreign to the Russians but appeared to be acting in support of the Allies by continuing the war. The Bolsheviks returning from exile were essentially Russian-oriented in the sense that they saw the Russian revolution as the first stage of world revolution and concerned themselves exclusively with the problems at home.

As the Russian summer offensive faltered after initial successes in July 1917, the Allies became concerned about potential problems on the western front. The French government and high command, aware that Russian troops were deserting the front lines enmasse, regarded Russian withdrawal from the war as inevitable. The stalemate on the western front would be broken. That summer the French General Staff began preparations to confront the bulk of the German divisions.³ The Rumanians were on the verge of collapse and this would shift further weight to the western front. The French became the Allied leaders in the move for

Japanese intervention to hold off the coming Allied disaster in Russia. They hoped that the Japanese intervention in Siberia would cause the Germans to shift forces to prevent the establishment of another front in Russia.⁴ The Americans were concerned that the vast stores of war materials stockpiled at Murmansk, Archangel, and Vladivostok would fall into unfriendly hands. The United States recognized that the key to further commerce with Siberia was control of the Trans-Siberian Railway. On Russian invitation the United States sent an Advisory Commission of Railway Experts under John F. Stevens to assist the Provisional Government restore efficiency to its railway operations. The British were worried about massive investments in Russia towards continuation of the war and sought control of the stockpiled war resources in north Russia.

The collapse of Alexander Kerensky's Provisional Government in November, 1917, shattered the Western world's dream of a liberal democracy in Russia. The victorious Bolsheviks, led by Nicholas Lenin and Leon Trotsky, were determined to reach two mutually-supportive goals: peace in Russia and the establishment of a communist system. The Bolsheviks were faced with the realities of the situation. The Russian front had collapsed long before the seizure of power by Lenin. By November the stream of soldiers from the fronts had become a flood. "Every train was the same: soldiers were jammed inside the cars so tightly that for days on end no man could stir an inch, for any purpose whatever. Yet those who rode thus rode in luxury."⁵

Having recognized the Provisional Government, the Allied Powers nervously watched and hopefully awaited the demise of the Bolsheviks. With the entire country in chaos and the Bolsheviks controlling only a small portion of the country, "there was no reason to prophesy for Lenin

and Trotsky a longer lease of political life than had been granted to Alexander Kerensky."⁶ Leon Trotsky, the Commissar for Foreign Affairs, made an official query to the Allied ambassadors in Moscow for recognition on 21 November. His note went unanswered. The Allies were unwilling to recognize the regime which had dissolved the democratically-elected Constituent Assembly, repudiated her war debts, and made unilateral peace overtures. Recognition of the Bolshevik regime prior to any treaty arrangements would impair Allied rights under international law. On the other hand, a treaty signed without recognition being granted could be considered null and void without affecting Allied rights or those of Russia.⁷

Robert Lansing, the American Secretary of State, gave the following advice to Russian Ambassador David R. Francis:

Do nothing...should be our policy until the black period of terrorism comes to an end and the rising tide of blood has run its course. It cannot last forever, but Russia will sink lower before better days come.⁸

The British embassy handled Russian recognition as a serious matter which would require the complete approval and support of the electorate.⁹ Allied contacts with the Bolsheviks were to be strictly unofficial. The American ambassador chose to maintain liaison through Colonel Raymond Robins, chief of the American Red Cross Mission. The British dispatched a special emissary, R. H. Bruce Lockhart, a former consul to Russia. This "middleman" approach was fraught with danger, especially since both men possessed strong personalities and a flair for drama. As a result of their nonrecognition policies, the Allies maintained contact with various counterrevolutionary groups throughout Russia. The British and French regarded these elements as an alternate solution to the restoration of stability in chaotic Russia. General

Alfred Knox, the former British military attaché in Russia, strongly advocated the establishment of a strong nucleus of Allied-supported military forces to act as opponents to Bolshevism.¹⁰ The American Consul General in Moscow, Maddin Summers, sent DeWitt C. Poole from the consulate to Rostov-on-Don in December to report on one such group, the Volunteer Army commanded by General M. V. Alexeev, and on the potential role of counterrevolutionaries in the present situation.

The American representatives in Moscow did not share Lansing's interpretation of United States policy towards Russia. When the Bolsheviks made official overtures for peace with the Central Powers in early December, 1917, these American officers dealt with the problem as they perceived the immediate goals of the United States. Francis believed that Lenin and Trotsky were "reckless adventurers" playing a game of bluff as a front for German support of their regime.¹¹ D. C. Poole had been advised by the Counselor of the State Department, Frank L. Polk, that America's primary concern was to keep Russia in the war. Polk had told him, "We were deeply worried, to put it mildly. We were almost in despair."¹² Brigadier General William Judson, the American military attaché to Russia, had been tasked to secure the formulation of an armistice by the Russians that was favorable to the Allies. This requirement would include a truce of long duration to hold the German troops on the eastern front, and would not provide for the exchange of war prisoners.¹³

Bolshevik diplomacy was wholly and inevitably opportunistic. The opportunism of weakness coalesced with that of temperament and calculation. Leon Trotsky as chief Bolshevik negotiator sought to gain time to consolidate the Bolshevik position in Russia in order to form a base for the spread of world revolution. His primary tactic was to play off

the imperialist powers against one another. At the second session Trotsky proposed an armistice of six months, the prohibition of German troop movements from the eastern front, and the evacuation of German forces from the islands in the Riga Gulf.¹⁴ The Germans were not about to agree to the proposals of the eager Bolsheviks. After parrying with Trotsky for several days the Germans realized that the only way to preclude a long, drawn-out settlement was to continue their advance into Russia. The plan worked well, for the armistice was signed on 15 December. This act did not stop the flow of Germans into Russian territory. The armistice contained no time proviso, no restriction on exchanging prisoners of war, and contained only a promise to hold units on the Russian front. The Germans had not been blind to the dissolution of the Russian armies after the July offensive. They had already moved the majority of the units designated to shift to the western front before the armistice. A supplementary clause of the armistice provided for "the immediate exchange of civil prisoners and prisoners of war unfit for further military service."¹⁵ This allowed the Germans to be rid of the Russian prisoners unfit for work and to gain access to fit civil prisoners for service in the military. The armistice allowed for the establishment of the Prisoner Repatriation Commission in Moscow, co-chaired by Count Mirbach of Germany and Karl Radek of the Bolsheviks.

The signing of the armistice brought the issue of war prisoners in Russia to the forefront as a problem to be reckoned with by the Allies. The Romanovs had mobilized an army of 18.5 million men to fight the Central Powers. Nearly 10 million fell into the categories of killed, wounded, and missing. Five million were dead or missing in action. Russian losses were greater than all the other Allies combined. Alone,

she had tied down nearly one hundred divisions on the eastern front.¹⁶ In addition to the release of divisions to the western front, the Allies became alarmed at the potential threat posed by an early return of nearly one million German and Austro-Hungarian soldiers imprisoned throughout the wide expanse of Russia.

Counter-revolutionary leaders had sprung up throughout Russia with the Bolshevik takeover. Among these was Captain Gregory Semenov, ataman of the Far Eastern Cossacks. Semenov fled Chita on 28 November for the Siberia-Manchuria border area. Enroute, he stopped at Dauria where he enlisted some German and Turkish officers for his staff and reestablished order in the camp controlled by the war prisoners.¹⁷ Once in Manchuria, Semenov enlisted Chinese bandits and employed prisoners of war from the Siberian camps for noncombatant duties.¹⁸

Maddin Summers in Moscow had early recognized the potential problem of the prisoners when he advocated Allied possession of the Trans-Siberian Railway. Control of the railroad would enable resupply to General Alexeev's and General Alexis M. Kaledin's Volunteer Armies, which would help eliminate the present regime. It would also help in the reorganization of the Russian forces, prevent the shipment of the stockpiled war materials to the Central Powers, but, most of all, could prevent the "release of a million prisoners being turned loose to join the enemy's ranks or to spread anarchy over Russia."¹⁹

On 22 December, John K. Caldwell, the American consul at Vladivostok, reported "many prisoners of war...escaping particularly from Krasnoyarsk." Caldwell believed that in the event of a separate peace, these prisoners' actions would necessitate Allied control of Vladivostok and the Priamur area to protect the shipping routes to China and Japan.²⁰

The British ambassador had cabled information on the presence of Germans in Petrograd and Moscow. In addition, the Bolsheviks had lost control over many of the prisoner of war camps because the prisoners were fleeing en masse from the camps to the cities.²¹ By the end of December, the prisoner threat had been discussed in four dispatches reaching Washington.

During November and December, attitudes and perceptions of the major participants in the Russian drama began to be established. The British and French wanted to keep Russia in the war, to guard the stockpiled supplies in north Russia and Siberia, to control the Trans-Siberian Railway and its feeder spurs, and to prevent repatriated prisoners from becoming German reinforcements on the western front. They sought to enlist Japan's help and to get the Americans more actively committed to assist.

The Bolshevik attitude was best described by Alban Gordon:

The Union of Socialist Soviet Republics was born, phoenix-like, from the smoking ashes in which the old order perished. Ringed round with the fire and steel of countless foes the new State faced incredible odds. Bankrupt in purse, devastated from end to end, blockaded and boycotted, it met fury with fury, cunning with cunning, brutality with brutality. Born after the travail of three years of war, two million dead its baptismal gift, a ravaged countryside its heritage, the infant State fed on its own blood for lack of sustenance, burnt its house about its ears for lack of firing.²²

The Bolsheviks could achieve nothing without first obtaining peace. All imperialists, whether Allied or enemy, had to be played against one another in order for the revolutionaries to survive.

The American attitude during this period also began to reflect consistent themes. Reports from the field emphasized the need to control the railroads of Russia, reduce the threat of prisoners being armed and deployed by the Germans, and the need to protect the stockpiled war materials. Messages were generally anti-Bolshevik in tone and urged

encouragement for the counterrevolutionary groups springing up throughout Russia. Secretary Lansing's advice had been to "do nothing" except try to keep Russia in the war.

Secretary Lansing had reached some very definite conclusions about the Russian situation by the middle of December. Lansing passed these on to President Woodrow Wilson and to Ambassador Walter Hines Page in London. Basically, these were his views:

1. The Bolsheviks would remove Russia from the war.
2. The longer the Bolsheviks remained in power the more difficult it would be to restore order from the chaos.
3. Russian withdrawal would add 2-3 more years to the war, making more demands upon the United States for money and manpower.
4. Collapse of Bolshevism would allow the reorganization of a Russian army capable of reentry in the war by early spring or summer.
5. The only hope for stability was a military dictatorship around General A. M. Kaledin.
6. The Cossacks should be informed of American attitude in order to prolong their resistance to the Bolsheviks.

Robert Lansing told the President that a message should be sent to Kaledin reflecting these views because "we have absolutely nothing to hope for from continued Bolshevik domination."²³ Later Lansing told Ambassador Page in London that the counterrevolutionaries under Kaledin and Alexeev represented the best potential for stability and the continuance of military operations against the Germans and Austrians.²⁴ Lansing introduced the idea of reconstructing another front in Russia against the Central Powers. Even though response from the White House was lukewarm, the Secretary's attitude would have definite bearing upon future Russian policy.

JANUARY, 1918

The new year brought an increase of interest in the prisoner of war issue. Message traffic dealing with the problem totalled eight

dispatches; seven from the field and one from within the State Department. Much of the American policy developed during this time was influenced by the proclamations of the Bolsheviks, the peace negotiations, and observations from field representatives.

On 20 January, V.I. Lenin published the justifications for peace with the Central Powers. Article Ten of "Lenin's Twenty-One Theses for Peace" stated:

Another argument for an immediate war is that by concluding peace we become agents of German imperialism because we free German troops on our front in addition to millions of prisoners, etc. This argument is equally fallacious.²⁵

This is the first formal acknowledgement by the Bolsheviks that the prisoner issue was a potential problem. Trotsky had already organized a Prisoner of War Bureau in the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs to propagandize the returning German and Austro-Hungarian war prisoners, despite German demands to cease these activities. Propaganda was a means of spreading the world revolution and creating problems for the Germans and Austrians. The German-Russian Prisoner Repatriation Commission began formal sessions in Moscow in January to expedite the exchange program.

Allied traffic centered about the substance of F. Lindley's message. The British Charge d'Affaires in Russia confirmed his ambassador's report of the previous month that the Bolsheviks had lost complete control over the prisoner of war camps. He additionally reported as fact a rumor that the Bolsheviks were organizing and arming the prisoners, especially in Siberia. Though this message was the only Anglo-French message of substance on this subject for over two months the contents of this dispatch definitely raised Allied eyebrows.²⁶

The lack of American interest in Allied intervention in Russia caused the French and British to probe the Japanese on their willingness

to participate in a Far Eastern effort against the Germans. These Allies were determined to recreate another eastern front to relieve pressure on the western front where a build-up had been taking place since Russia's withdrawal from the war. The Germans were sure to push their advantage in the west in the early spring. The imperialist element in Japan's government was quite disturbed by the Anglo-French inquiries. These Japanese believed that there existed the nucleus of a German-Asian army in the prisoner camps which if released might establish control in Siberia and then pose a threat to Japan's continental ambitions.²⁷ It should be remembered that Japan was another latecomer in the war and had profited by easy conquest of the former German colonial holdings in the Pacific.

From Vladivostok, Consul Caldwell reported that the war prisoner menace was increasing and that they might attempt to seize the stock-piled war materials for shipment to Germany.²⁸ Maddin Summers in Moscow sent three messages about the prisoners, warning that they represented a threat to the Trans-Siberian Railway, which was of paramount importance to Generals Kaledin and Alexeev. Summers' on-the-spot accounts of the repatriation commission's work and the volume of prisoners in Moscow to demonstrate its effectiveness further emphasized the growing problem.²⁹ Consul Poole, on special duty in Rostov-on-Don observing the Volunteer Army, felt that someone ought to consider "the practicality of removing German and Austrian war prisoners from Siberia into Manchuria under Chinese guard."³⁰ The American minister in Peking, Paul Reinsch, was concerned enough about the issue of the prisoners to send his military attaché, Major W. S. Drysdale, to Siberia to investigate. Drysdale was accompanied by a Serbian Colonel Speshneff.³¹

At the State Department the Third Assistant Secretary, Breckenridge

Long, gave Secretary Lansing a memorandum of his visit with the Russian Ambassador, Boris A. Bakhmeteff. Mr. Long had posed a hypothetical question to the ambassador: would the Japanese fear the possibility of rearmed and reorganized war prisoners in Siberia striking a blow against Japan by threatening her Far Eastern interests? Bakhmeteff did not believe that this was feasible since the majority of the prisoners were Austrians not Germans.³² Concerning Japan's reaction to Allied probes on intervention, President Wilson told his Secretary of State to inform the Japanese ambassador "that we should look upon military action in that quarter with distinct disapproval."³³ This statement added another dimension to the problem.

During January 1918, British and French were beginning to accept the fact that the chances of the Bolsheviks remaining in the war now that the armistice had been signed were slim. They began turning their energies to the recreation of another front, ideally in Russia. The Japanese were prime candidates for this mission, along with the various counterrevolutionary groups in Russia. United States concern with Japanese intentions in the Far East offered further opportunities to the British and French interventionists.

Message traffic from the field to the State Department dealt with the prisoner issue and anti-Bolshevik activities. The field representatives were concerned enough about the war prisoners to send an investigator into Siberia. Control of the railway was still crucial. The "do nothing" advice remained in force to preserve the anti-Bolshevik attitudes, in contrast with the pro-Bolshevik attitudes of the unofficial liaison officer, Colonel Raymond Robins. Secretary Lansing's views on Russia received support from the field. The State Department continued

to probe the prisoner issue through its limited contacts. President Wilson had demonstrated his concern over the possibility of Japanese incursions into Russia via Siberia by viewing them as potential threats to American interests in the Far East. Washington's interest in Russia had increased from previous periods.

FEBRUARY, 1918

During the month of February, the dispatch traffic on the prisoner issue increased to fifteen messages, nearly double that of the previous month. Fourteen messages originated in the field. The increase can be attributed to the signing of the peace treaty by the Bolsheviks.

On 9 February, a separate peace was signed between the sovereign independent Ukrainian People's Republic and the Central Powers at Brest-Litovsk. The American diplomatic community took little notice of this act and failed to recognize the impact of two key articles in the treaty; Articles VI and VIII:

Article VI: Prisoners of war of both parties shall be released to their homeland in so far as they do not desire, with approval of the State in whose territory they shall be, to remain within its territories or to proceed to another country. Questions connected with this will be dealt with in the separate treaties or in Article VIII.

Article VIII: The establishing of public and private legal relations, and the exchange of prisoners of war and interned civilians, the amnesty question, as well as the question of the treatment of merchant shipping in the enemy's hands, shall be settled by means of separate Treaties with the Ukrainian People's Republic, which shall form an essential part of the present Treaty of Peace, and, as far as practicable, come into force simultaneously therewith.³⁴

These articles in the peace treaty with the Ukraine actually opened the floodgates for prisoner repatriation and were an indication of what the later peace with Russia would dictate. The Allies did not see that once the initial process had begun in a nation adjacent to Russia, it was

virtually impossible to prevent the establishment of the same system in Russia. The Americans and their Allies patiently awaited the seemingly more important final peace with the Bolsheviks before reacting.

On 21 February the Germans submitted peace proposals which contained two critical articles; Articles VIII and IX. The first dealt with Russia assuming the costs of prisoner of war repatriation and guaranteeing assistance to the German commission of war prisoners. The second called for a halt to Bolshevik propagandizing in the prisoner of war camps and agitating against the Central Powers. The Germans had become acutely aware of the efforts being made by the Bolsheviks to propagandize the returning war prisoners in order to foment continuing world revolution.³⁵ In the final agreement the Bolsheviks were able to change the wording of the article dealing with support of the war prisoner commissions. The Tilsit version stated that "Russia shall admit and support, according to her ability, German Commissions for the protection of German prisoners of war, civilians, and those returning home."³⁶ The article concerning propaganda efforts remained unchanged. The import of the phrase "according to her ability" was that it allowed the Bolsheviks to ignore or provide only limited support to this effort.

German presence in Russia, especially in those areas not dominated by the Bolsheviks, threatened the government's continued existence and presented the image of German domination which could justify intervention by the Allied Powers.³⁷ With traditional Teutonic efficiency, the Germans quickly sent officer teams throughout Russia to organize the expeditious repatriation of the war prisoners. This action inspired numerous field reports that the Germans were everywhere in Russia organizing cadres to enlist the services of the former war prisoners. Communications being what they were, Allied diplomatic missions in the

outlying areas rarely received information on what was happening on the international scene, to include the terms of peace treaties, except from local newspapers. The result was poorly informed field representatives during very chaotic conditions both in Russia and on the international scene.

From the field significant messages came from Moscow, Peking, Tokyo, and Harbin in central Manchuria. At Harbin the American consul, Charles K. Moser, was host for John F. Stevens, the chairman of the Advisory Commission of Railway Experts to Russia. Moser was opposed to supporting the counterrevolutionaries because of their disorganization and inefficiency. He emphasized that Siberia and the railways would fall into the hands of the German war prisoners and Bolsheviks unless something was done quickly. Armed German prisoners were reportedly acting as guards in some Siberian towns. Stevens emphasized in a final comment that unless America took over the railroads, the Japanese would.³⁸ Throughout 1918, Moser remained the best source of information on General Semenov, who was operating along the Manchurian border. Moser also reported that German prisoners at Irkutsk were anticipating mobilization orders from Petrograd. In the meantime, the Bolsheviks were trying to arm them.³⁹

Minister Paul Reinsch at Peking began relaying the reports of his military attaché, Major Walter S. Drysdale, who was investigating the prisoner situation in Siberia. Drysdale's first report, on 15 December, noted about 30,000 Austrian and German prisoners in eastern Siberia and the Lake Baikal region. His first impression was "that there was no organized effort to use prisoners in large numbers in the recent fighting in Irkutsk." Drysdale did not consider them "a serious menace to Allied interests."⁴⁰ These remarks have often been taken out of context because

Drysdale qualified his comments by limiting his report to the prisoner situation only at Irkutsk, and specifically to those under the supervision of the Danish Red Cross volunteers. The military attaché's second report, received 15 February, was not as optimistic. Now there were German agents actively working to purchase war materials, and the war prisoners were being released. Their organization was thought to be a possible menace to Allied interests.⁴¹ Minister Reinsch at Peking added his thoughts on the subject after receiving Drysdale's reports, and prior to forwarding them to State. He had reliable information that the prisoners west of Irkutsk were being organized from Petrograd and that the local Bolsheviks were fraternizing with these groups.⁴² Reinsch concluded that unless something positive was done, unfriendly forces would capitalize upon these available manpower resources and would cause Japan to react unilaterally.⁴³ Washington became rather concerned with these Siberian reports. Secretary Lansing was interested but confused. Apparently, the report that Reinsch had sent Major Drysdale to investigate in Siberia had been overlooked.⁴⁴ When Secretary Lansing was reminded that Reinsch's reports were coming from an American military investigator in Siberia, he wanted to know what proportion of railway towns east of Irkutsk were held by the Bolsheviks and what the available opposition was. Lansing additionally asked "whether reports are true that German and Austrian prisoners of war were active in propaganda and what was the weight of their influence."⁴⁵ Secretary Lansing thus tried to sort out the details being received from the field in order to discern fact from rumor.

The British and French were putting pressure on Robert Lansing at home. The French consulate at Irkutsk was reporting the organization of German prisoners at that city to oppose the Allies.⁴⁶ The counselor

at the British embassy in Washington, Colville A. Barclay, passed information from his ministry in Peking recommending support for General Semenov. Barclay hoped to secure American financial support for this counterrevolutionary. The Russian minister at Peking had provided the essence of the message. Semenov himself had furnished information on camp locations and prisoner populations (See Map A):

Between Dastufya and Baikal: 10-15,000 among the peasants.
 Dastufya: 1,400 guarded by Semenov's Cossacks.
 Chita: 10-15,000 unguarded prisoners.
 Verkhneudinsk: 4,800 of which 800 were officers.

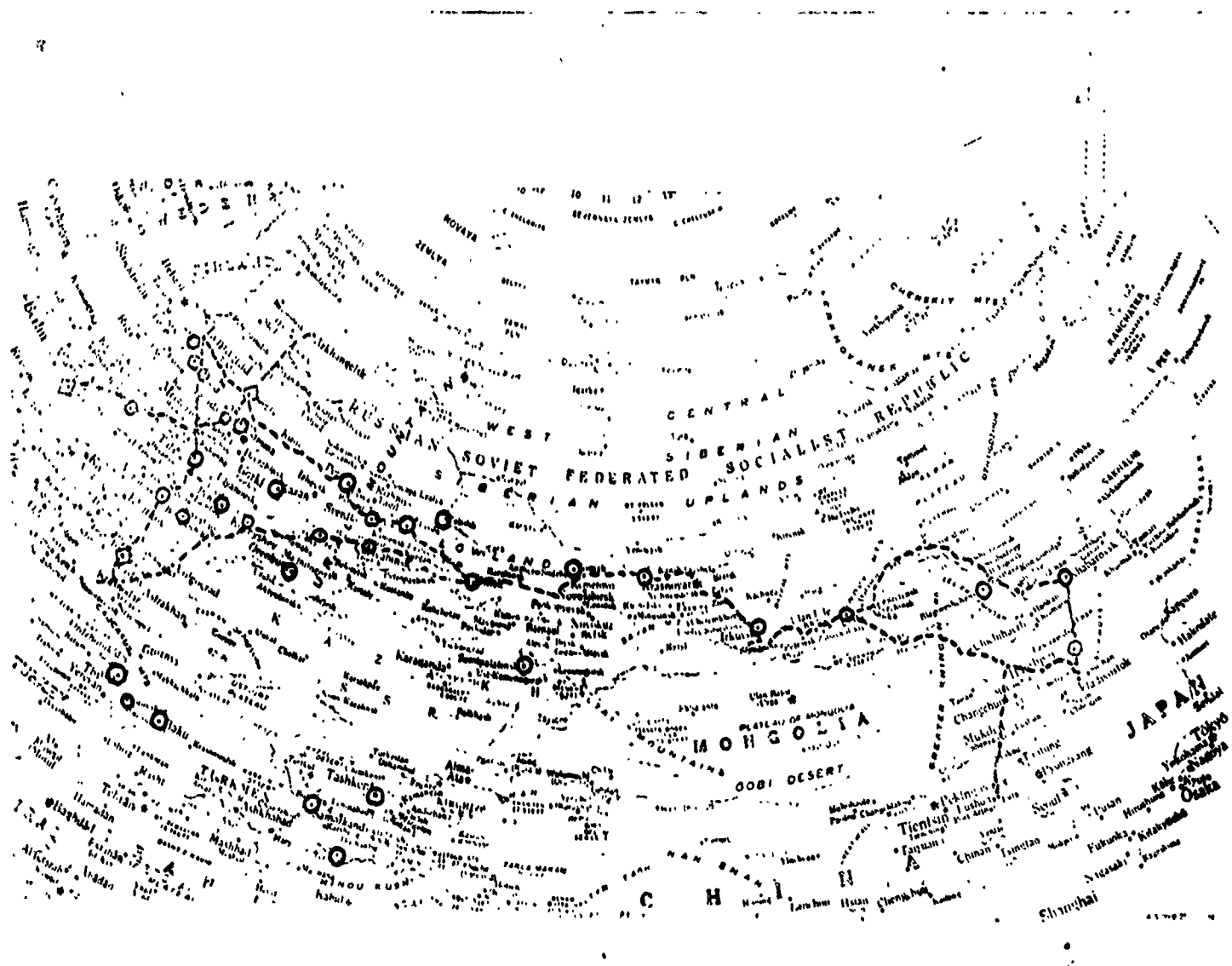
The majority of these prisoners were Austrians with a small population of Turks.⁴⁷

Japanese interest had prompted the Assistant Chief of the Japanese General Staff Tanaka to discuss with Chinese Minister Chang Tsung-hsiang the possible use of German organized war prisoners against the Far East.⁴⁸ Japan's military staff had prepared a contingency plan to support their interests in Siberia by the end of February, 1918. Japan planned to use its occupation troops in Korea supported by mainland reinforcements. The policy was anti-Bolshevik, since sufficient troops were to be introduced "to destroy the Bolshevik troops and the German and Austrian prisoners-of-war who are in the Territory."⁴⁹ The Japanese were thus the first to justify intervention in Russia based upon the threat of the German and Austrian prisoners of war. Previously the Japanese had fulfilled their obligations to the French and British by taking Germany's Pacific holdings, making Twenty-One Demands upon a weakened China, and by dominating and controlling Pacific shipping during the war.⁵⁰

To further the alarm, Maddin Summers in Moscow stated that the city was filled with Austrian and German war prisoners who were inciting

MAP A

MAP OF RUSSIA WITH LOCATIONS OF THE PRISONER OF WAR CAMPS



Map of the Soviet Union, 1: 28,000,000, Rand McNally Cosmopolitan World Atlas, Enlarged "Planet Earth" Edition (Chicago: Rand McNally Co., 1971), p. 28.

the Bolsheviks to excesses.⁵¹ Ambassador Francis concluded that there were "sufficient German and Austrian prisoners available to form an army larger than the Red Guard."⁵² Francis' assessment was based on the fact that prior to the American entry in the war one of his initial tasks was to oversee the Austrian and German prisoner of war camps in Russia. Ambassador Francis mentioned this in his memoirs as being a considerable task.

The continued advance of the German armies into Russia during the treaty negotiations had created considerable concern amongst the Allied ambassadors for their personal safety. Ambassador Francis dramatized his intentions to move from Moscow to Vologda in his messages to the Far Eastern consulates and ministries. Because there were 20,000 prisoners reportedly arming at Irkutsk, the ambassador felt that it was necessary for the Far Eastern consulates and ministries to begin preparations to handle substantial relief forces.⁵³ The vagueness of his cable caused Ambassador Roland Morris in Tokyo to query the State Department for immediate advice. Rendering assistance to the Francis party would be extremely difficult from Tokyo, since Admiral Austin M. Knight and the warship, Olympia, were not due at Vladivostok until March. The Railway Commission at Harbin was totally unarmed.⁵⁴ At any rate, nothing happened to Ambassador Francis in his flight to Vologda. He only managed to stir up the embassy and ministry staffs in Japan and China over the threat posed by the prisoners of war in Siberia. Francis had a tendency to overstate certain issues and used whatever issues were available to reinforce his anti-Bolshevik sentiments.

The signing of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty between Russia and the Central Powers on 3 March 1918, resulted in considerably more publicity

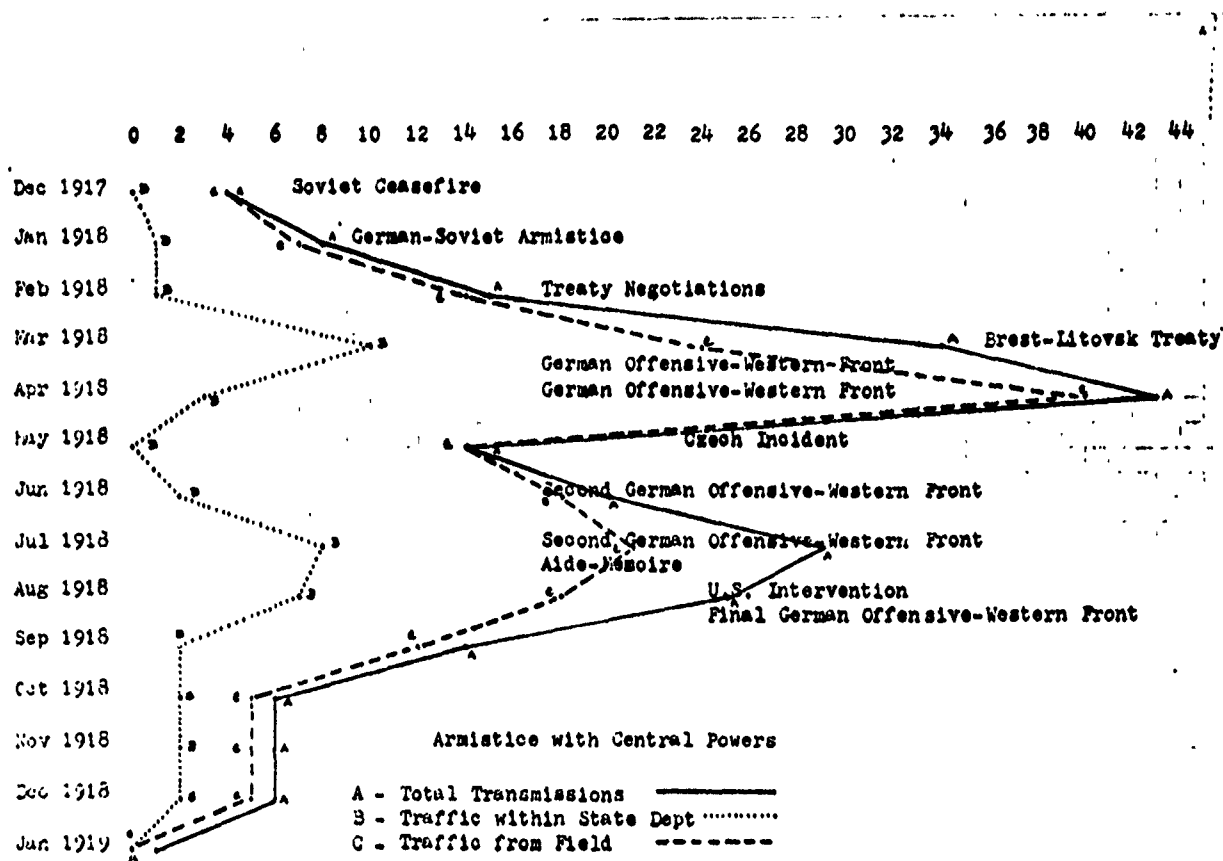
for the prisoner of war issue. The French and British viewed the prisoner community as a definite threat to Siberia and the Trans-Siberian Railway. They were quite willing to make this an alarmist issue to persuade the Americans to intervene alongside the Japanese. The Japanese saw the prisoners as justification for advancing their interests in the Far East and for protecting their trade monopoly in the Pacific. The British were the most opportunistic since they were willing to cooperate with any Russian group that would actively oppose Germany. They were less concerned with world public opinion, and military necessity generally shaped their Russian policy.⁵⁵

V. I. Lenin's analysis of the situation varied with the fortunes of war. Lenin was more impressed by factors dividing the Allies than by their prospects of unity. Wherever possible his foreign policy would rest upon the encouragement of these divisions through concessions, compromises, and negotiations.⁵⁶

The American attitudes were more complex. Message traffic about the prisoner of war issue had doubled monthly: 4 in December, 8 in January, and 15 in February. The primary reasons for this increase were Russian unilateral withdrawal from the war and the peace agreements made with the Central Powers in February. At this point President Wilson had expressed his concern over the possibilities of unilateral military action by the Japanese in the Far East. Secretary of State Robert Lansing supported an anti-Bolshevik policy and advocated support to the counterrevolutionary groups throughout Russia. Lansing perceived a prisoner threat to the Trans-Siberian Railway which would affect both commerce with Siberia and the stockpiled war materials at Vladivostok. From the field, Ambassador Francis was in the vanguard of early anti-Bolshevik sentiment.

APPENDIX 1

GRAPH DEPICTING POW MESSAGE VOLUME
DECEMBER, 1917, THROUGH JANUARY, 1919



END NOTES

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20. John K. Caldwell to Lansing, Dec. 22, 1917, file 861.00/861, DSNAM.
21. Francis to Lansing, Dec. 11, 1917, file 861.00/786, DSNAM.
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THE WAR PRISONERS

The complexities of the prisoner of war issue can be better appreciated by examining their numbers, nationalities and locations, their treatment throughout the war, and the various national attitudes towards these unfortunates. Estimates of the number of prisoners interned in Russia in 1918, vary from 1.5 million to 2 million. American Ambassador David R. Francis calculated that there were 1½ million Austrian and ½ million German soldiers and 250,000 German and Austrian civilians imprisoned in the Russian camps.¹ George F. Kennan estimated a total of about 1.6 million prisoners, one-tenth being German. Approximately 800,000 of these prisoners were located along the Trans-Siberian Railway and its many spurlines.² Emil Lengyel, a former Austrian prisoner of war, and Louise Bryant, an American observer in Moscow during 1917-1918, stated that there were two million prisoners in Russia, with the majority being Austro-Hungarians.³ The best accounting of prisoners available was provided by Lieutenant General Nicholas N. Golovine, until September 1917, Chief of Staff of the Russian Armies on the Rumanian Front. His tabulations total nearly two million prisoners, with one-sixteenth being German:⁴

<u>Categories</u>	<u>German</u>	<u>Austrian</u>	<u>Turkish</u>	<u>Bulgarians</u>
In camps, hospitals, working	143,602	1,605,828	63,363	665
Transferred to Allied nations & recruited	2,639	36,639		
Invalids repatriated	2,996	16,526	258	
Transferred to neutral nations for internment	366	1,118		

<u>Categories</u>	<u>German</u>	<u>Austrian</u>	<u>Turkish</u>	<u>Bulgarians</u>
Died	4,575	46,448	582	3
Escaped	5,212	30,205	306	2
Total	159,390	1,736,764	64,509	670
Grand Total	1,961,333			

Map A identifies the location of many of the cited prisoner compounds and indicates those with the largest populations. This map also illustrates the vast distances between camps and the relationship of most camps to the railroads in the area.

Conditions in most prison camps were deplorable. Many of the original sites in western Russia were abandoned in late 1917, as the German advance continued into that area. The inhabitants were entrained to various locations in Siberia along the Trans-Siberian Railway. Lengyel felt that Siberia was a natural prison site because of its virtual isolation from the rest of the world. The camp populations ranged in size from 35,000 to less than 100. The war prisoner populations often exceeded the largest cities in Siberia at that time. The prisoners came in three waves; the first group came early in the war, the second with the fall of Przemysl in southeast Poland to the Russians in 1915, and the largest in the summer of 1916.⁵ Accommodations included abandoned estates, old castles, vacant hotels, and former barracks.

Life in the camps would compare to present-day accounts of the Russian Gulags. Entire camps were swept with epidemics of scurvy, typhus, and typhoid fever. In what was reputedly the worst camp, Totzkoye, 17,000 of 25,000 prisoners died of typhoid fever during the winter of 1916-1917. Throughout Siberia, lunatic asylums were filled with former prisoners who had become mentally deranged as a result of their long captivity.⁶ Those prisoners fortunate enough to have been farmed out to the

agricultural communities were provided a better chance for survival.

The Central Powers and Russia were basically apathetic towards these groups. The humanitarian efforts to improve their lot were very limited and severely curtailed by both parties to prevent adverse public opinion. International law allowed the employment of enlisted prisoners on public works projects, employment by private citizens, and self-employment. Officer prisoners were confined to the camps and provided subsistence money.

Russian prisoner of war policy must be subdivided into two periods, before and after the Russian armistice. The Czarist regime controlled relations until the March revolution and then was followed by the Provisional Government until its collapse in November. Prior to the armistice the prisoners of war, particularly the Czechs, were exploited by Allies and Central Powers alike. The Russians capitalized upon the dissatisfaction of the Czechoslovak element in the Austrian armies by lending support to their efforts to achieve independence. Russian successes led to French and Italian interest in the same opportunities. Great Britain had provided the capital to support the construction of railroads in north Russia and in Turkestan. Both sides used prisoners as an additional source of labor, propagandized them, and employed them as psychological warfare tools. The American community served as the intermediary nation for the German and Austrian war prisoner interests and assisted humanitarian efforts through the YMCA. All these efforts pointed out the potential represented by the large prisoner of war population for military recruiting, propagandizing, and as a substitute labor force. The issue was not a new thing to the nations involved in the European war. The magnitude of the potential did not surface until the armistice raised the

possibility of mass repatriation. Now it appeared that the Central Powers could also utilize these assets heretofore reserved for the Allies.

As early as October 1914, the Russians recruited from the prisoner of war ranks. The first recruits were seven hundred Czechoslovaks who, with their three hundred Russian cadre, were employed against the Austrian armies as spies and agitators among the Czecho-Slovak regiments.⁷ The "Czech Escort" was the foundation of the Czecho-Slovak Army in Russia. The original four companies were replenished regularly by defectors. As the success of the unit grew, additional companies were formed in 1915 and 1916 to serve as reconnaissance companies for the Russian divisions.⁸ Delegates were sent to the camps of Siberia and Turkestan to recruit the interned Czechs, until by the summer of 1916, some 16,000 former Czech prisoners had enlisted in Russian regiments under Russian cadres. The Czech National Council obtained permission to move the Czech prisoners held by the Rumanians to France where they had volunteered to fight on the western front. The first contingent departed in early 1917, and was designated as the Na-Zdar unit of the French Foreign Legion. The unit served with distinction, earning the admiration of all the Allies fighting on the western front.⁹

Though the number of Czechs in the Russian Army grew to 25,000, the size of the separate Czech element was restricted to 3,000. In March, 1917, Prince George Lvov lifted all restrictions on prisoner recruiting and established regulations for formation of a Czech Army in Russia. A Czech prisoner of war delegation meeting was arranged at Kiev on 6 May 1917, to formally announce the formation of the Czech Army.¹⁰ The victory of the Czecho Slovak Brigade at Zhorov on 19 June 1917, and the effective rear guard action for General Erdelli's army group,

bolstered recruiting even more. Czech and Slovak prisoners began to pour into Barispol, a former military camp, where they were organized into units. The brigade was expanded to a division, with the overflow forming the 2nd Czechoslovak Division. The Czech corps was to be commanded by the Russian General Sokorov until its independence in 1918.¹¹

The Czechs received preferential treatment from the Russians as a result of their Slavic background. Skilled workers were in great demand at the munitions factories of Taganrog. The 1,700 Czechs employed there were given freedom of the city and later the opportunity to leave to join the Czech Army of Russia.¹² The Czechs seem to have been able to capitalize upon their captivity and desire for independence throughout the war.

The 200,000 Czechs imprisoned by the Russians, Rumanians, and other Allies proved a fertile field. The success of the French in forming Czech units to fight on the western front prompted the Italians to investigate the opportunity. In early 1917, the Italian Ambassador, Marquis Carlotti, recommended that his government initiate the formation of a Czech Legion in Italy. The Italians had been quite successful in their propaganda efforts to get entire Czech units on their front to surrender en masse. The Italians concentrated their Czech prisoners, 22,000 of them, at Camp Santa Vetere near Naples and then formed and trained a guerrilla force at Padua in northern Italy.¹³

Thomas G. Macaryk, President of the Czech National Council, offered these comments on the motivations of the Czech prisoners:

Naturally not all of our 40,000 volunteers were of equal character and worth. Naturally, too, not all of them had been prompted to join us by patriotic enthusiasm. Upon them the effects of life in most Russian prisoners' camps had been very harmful....To many of our men service in our Legion meant release. This was certainly the case in the post-revolutionary period of 1917 and particularly in 1918.

The Legion offered greater personal safety and better treatment.¹⁴

Less publicized and written about was the plight of the remainder of prisoners not fortunate enough to reap the benefits of the Czech Legion. The vast majority of prisoners in Siberia were farmed out to the peasants as hired help. The vastness of Siberia as a prison center defeated most attempts or desire to escape if the opportunity arose.¹⁵ At Irbit in western Siberia the enlisted prisoners constructed a railway spur to the Trans-Siberian Railway.¹⁶ During 1915-1917, a single-track, wide gauge railroad of 1,600 miles was constructed from Murmansk to Petrograd. The cost was 60 million dollars, furnished by the British. Hundreds of Czechs, Germans, and Magyars perished in the construction during the perpetual nights of the Arctic.¹⁷ On the windy steppes of Turkestan, the former soldiers were decimated by sandstorms, malaria, typhus, and exposure when forced to build the railway from Bokhara to the Afghan.¹⁸

Before the armistice with Russia, the Germans capitalized on the advantages of her prisoner population by putting them to work throughout the country where possible. Additionally, the Germans placed revolutionary pamphlets advocating the overthrow of the Czar in the Russian camps. Their attack was directed at the industrialists and the treatment of the workers in Russia. Throughout 1916, the Germans sought to release or exchange Russian prisoners as soon as possible to flood Russia with revolutionary doctrine.¹⁹

The American diplomats in Russia served as the official liaison for the Austrian and German prisoners of war in Russia until the entry of the United States in the war. Ambassador Francis described the enormity of this intermediary task by stating: "It required not only the exclusive

services of a large corps of able associates, known as the Relief Corps, but demanded my personal attention for several hours daily."²⁰ Basil Miles, the head of the Russia desk in the State Department, served with this group during his tenure as a consul in Moscow. This high State Department officer's extensive experience with the war prisoners lent credence to many of the unconfirmed field reports being received by Washington.

Much information came through the activities of two volunteer relief organizations operating in Russia; the Young Men's Christian Association and the American Red Cross. The American YMCA, operating under the auspices of the World Alliance YMCA in Geneva, established its headquarters in Petrograd after being allowed access to the camps in Russia. The War Prisoners Aid Division attempted to bring intellectual, physical and emotional comfort to the imprisoned soldiers. They distributed supplies and established educational and recreational activities in Kazan, Orenburg, Tashkent, Perm, Tobolsk, Tomsk, Krasnoyarsk, Irkutsk, Chita, and Khabarovsk. These staff workers developed a deep commitment to their duties and provided a welcome source of intelligence to the State Department during the chaotic period.²¹ The YMCA distributed the propaganda put out by the Committee on Public Information, assisted in the repatriation efforts of the Austrians and Germans, and performed civil work in the cities.²²

Prisoner relations differed drastically after the armistice was signed between Russia and the Central Powers. Now the Bolsheviks would be the Allies' major competitor for the prisoner of war assets, while German plans became obscured by the ill-defined relationship between Russia and the Central Powers. The Bolsheviks early recognized the great

potential represented by the war prisoners spread throughout Russia. The first Bolshevik appeal to the war prisoners was made in Pravda on 2 December 1917, followed by another in Izvestiya on 5 December. The Bolshevik measures were designed to meet the growing threat to Russia. The level of revolutionary propaganda was increased in both imperialist camps by actively recruiting German and Austrian war prisoners to support the Russian soviet and to expand international communism. This deprived the Central Powers of additional manpower and, after suitable indoctrination, would provide political fighters for the projected German revolution. It should be remembered that Lenin's model called for continuation of world revolution in Germany. The converted prisoners would also be willing to fight their former enemies, the western Allies, especially if they decided to intervene as imperialists against the Bolsheviks in Russia.²³

The motives for recruiting were confusing even to the other Bolsheviks, as a query from the Don Voisko Krug indicated when they asked the reason for the German and Austrian prisoners being in the ranks of the Red Guard.²⁴

The Bolsheviks sought to form cadres of trained, experienced personnel possessing organizational ability and technical skills to reconstruct a viable military force. These schooled soldiers could then be used as politically conscious elements in the new army which now consisted of lower classes being led by other peasants.²⁵ It was basically the result of war prisoner recruiting in Turkestan which enabled the Bolsheviks with the small Russian minority to control that outlying area.²⁶

The importance attached to the prisoner population can be seen in the establishment of a War Prisoners Bureau within the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs. It was the efforts of this bureau which led to the first prisoner of war congress in Samara in January, 1918. These delegates

petitioned for permission to allow the war prisoners to form Red Guard units. The result was the establishment of the international battalions throughout Russia.²⁷ By February, 1918, formal organization of the war prisoners was well underway. Meetings were held with delegations throughout Russia: Omsk, 10 February; Moscow, 13 February; Petrograd, 19 February; Hungarians at Omsk, 10 March; Kenishma and Kostroma, 20 March; and again at Samara, 23 March. From these congresses agitators were launched to the camps of Borovsk, Novgorod, Yaroslavl, Tver, Saratov, Penza, Ufa, Chelyabinsk, Ekaterinburg, and Tomsk.²⁸

Louise Bryant described the meeting held in Moscow:

Delegates from the two million war prisoners who met in the Foreign Office became so impregnated with Bolshevik propaganda and spread it so thoroughly among their men that whenever a prisoner escaped and got back into Germany he was kept in a detention camp for two weeks and fed on literature gotten out of the German government and calculated as a cure for the revolutionary fever. Every prisoner was forced to undergo this ordeal before he was allowed contact again with his own people.²⁹

The success of the intensive three month effort at recruiting prisoners resulted in between 50,000 to 90,000 being enlisted in the Red Army of 1918.³⁰ This recruiting was vitally important to the Bolsheviks, whose armed forces totalled less than 50,000 in an environment where the Czech Legion and various counterrevolutionary armies all outnumbered it. A viable military force was essential to allow the Bolsheviks to consolidate their power. Turkestan was one of the many areas where the prisoner strength compensated for the lack of Bolshevik power to dominate the region.

The following recruiting proclamation was published in English, French, German, Italian, and Russian on 19 April 1918:

Comrade Internationalists! Russia has been caught in a vise but her voice, thundering above the din of the World War, calls humanity to truth and justice for the poor and oppressed. Russia has many

enemies, external and internal, mighty and perfidious. Russia does not need words and empty expressions of sympathy. She needs work, discipline, organization, and fearless fighters. Have you faith in the Revolution, in the International, in the Soviet Government? If you have, join at once the International Legion of the Red Army.³¹

International units were spread throughout Russia to add further strength to the Bolshevik governments:

Karelia - 3 battalions of the 4th International Regiment, numbering 4,000
 Petrograd - Karl Liebknecht Regiment and 2nd Communist F. Adler Battalion
 Moscow - 1st International Battalion (largest in Russia) The Chinese Regiment, 2 Revolutionary Polish Regiments
 Yaroslavl - 1st and 2nd International Communist Regiments
 Voronezh - 3rd International Regiment
 Kazan - Karl Marx Battalion
 Saratov - Undesignated International Unit
 Novonikolayevsk - Karl Marx Regiment
 Omsk - Internationalist Unit of 2,400
 Irkutsk - 2 International Companies
 Krasnoyarsk - 1st International Battalion³²

The exploits of the international units in cooperation with the Red Guard were noted at the Siberian Congress of War Prisoners held at Irkutsk on 15 April 1918. The "proletarian elements of the war prisoners," namely the Germans, Hungarians, and Magyars, were credited with helping to suppress counterrevolutionary uprisings at Omsk, Tomsk, and Irkutsk, fighting successfully against General Semenov's bands along the Siberia-Manchuria borders, and with defending Russia against the Czech Legion.³³

The counterrevolutionary armies were early forced to conscription to support their numerous operations. The initial differences in social composition between the two elements which were quite marked in the early days, faded rapidly. Assessing prisoner loyalty and reliability, it was just a matter of who held the gun at the time. The White Armies tended to form separate units from these prisoners of war and deserters. General Peter N. Wrangel described his enlistment procedure after capturing

prisoners:

I ordered three hundred and seventy...to line up... Officers and noncommissioned officers...I had...shot on the spot. Then I told the rest that they, too, deserved death, but I had let those who had misled them to take responsibility for their treason, because I wanted to give them a chance to atone for their crime and prove their loyalty to their country. Weapons were distributed to them immediately, and two weeks later they were sent into the fighting line and behaved with great courage.³⁴

It is hardly any wonder that the released prisoners were described by Consul D. C. Poole of Moscow as "another set of vagabonds over the country."³⁵ Life of a prisoner of war in these times in Russia was uncertain at best.

The Germans were more informed than concerned about their countrymen's plight in the prison camps. The numbers were relatively small compared to the other nationalities, although, there were more dependable officers amongst them. There was a single case of a Lieutenant E. Scholz, who after his return from a Siberian camp, urged his government to increase its influence in Russia because there were 80,000 Germans located there ready to support these efforts.³⁶ Scholz's accounting of the Germans imprisoned in Siberia was quite accurate, and his suggestion lends credence to the idea that German propaganda was being smuggled into the prisoner of war camps to improve morale. Karl Ackerman, a New York Times correspondent in Russia, mentioned memoranda addressed to the German and Austrian prisoners in the names of Kaiser Wilhelm II and King Charles I. These letters encouraged the prisoners to continue supporting their nation from prison and suggested that rewards and punishments would be meted out according to their reactions.³⁷

The Germans were very concerned about Bolshevik propagandizing in the prison camps, to the point of including a prohibition in the armistice

agreements and writing it into the final treaty settlement. The acting commander at Allenstein reported that large numbers of soldiers and non-commissioned officers who were returnees from Russian prison camps had lost all sense of discipline and were indoctrinated with Bolshevik theories. These disruptive elements added to the troubles amongst soldiers who were beginning to question the status quo in Germany.³⁸ Even the soldiers formerly stationed on the eastern front brought difficulties to their new units. Major General Max Hoffmann commented:

It was unfortunately impossible to prevent individuals who were dissatisfied that they had been torn from their units, and sent from a quiet Front into fresh fighting, from passing on the poison which they had imbibed in the East from Bolshevik theories.³⁹

The German Ministry of Foreign Affairs demanded that the Bolshevik government disband its international units and cease political indoctrination of the war prisoners in violation of the treaty agreements. The Russian response was to deny that it was politically indoctrinating the prisoners and to insist that all internationalists had applied for and received Russian citizenship before being allowed to join.⁴⁰

The Austrians were especially concerned about the recruiting and propagandizing by the Bolsheviks because of the large-scale defection of the Czech units which were being formed into formidable fighting forces against the Central Powers. The entire Austrian army morale was affected by these desertions, often by entire units. They were able to accept more readily the recruiting for internationalist units. The hunger and miserable conditions in the prison camps were ample justifications. The Austrian government discounted the possibility of political motivation by explaining that the Bolsheviks were aiming their efforts toward artillery and other technical specialists.⁴¹ The Bolsheviks established their assembly point for the forming "Austrian Red Army" at Kenishma on

the Volga, while the Hungarians rallied at Novonikolayevsk to form the "First Proletarian Red Army."⁴²

The Germans did attempt to form two divisions in Germany of Ukrainian war prisoners specially selected by the War Ministry. When employed in the invasion of the Ukraine they fell victim to radical influences and had to be disbanded. General Ludendorff commented on that unsuccessful experiment:

I had hoped that, just as the Entente had derived some benefit from its prisoners, we should at least obtain some assistance from the sons of the land we had liberated from Bolshevik dominion.⁴³

This same commander did make some positive comments about prisoner of war units, unfortunately to his chagrin, since they concerned former allies attempting to rejoin the fight on the western front. While invading the Ukraine, the German troops attempted to cut off the Czech Legion from the transportation essential for its movement. The Germans experienced little resistance from the Bolsheviks. However, fierce engagements took place with the Czechs near Bakhmach, forcing the Germans to break contact.⁴⁴

The Bolsheviks did not limit their propaganda and recruiting efforts to the non-Czech prisoners of war. Svoboda, a pro-Bolshevik newspaper published by the Czechoslovak section of the War Prisoner Bureau, advocated the establishment of a confederation of Slavic republics under the leadership of Russia. An energetic campaign was launched against President Thomas Masaryk, accusing him of counterrevolutionary sympathies. Though the Bolsheviks and White Army attracted some recruits, the majority remained with Masaryk and the Czech Legion.⁴⁵ Thomas Masaryk had no option but to allow these Bolshevik efforts in his camps to preserve peaceful relations with the Bolsheviks; their final tally was 218 converts, and some of these returned within a day.⁴⁶ The Allied decree signed in

Paris on 16 December 1917, established the Czech Army of the West. This act served as recognition by the European Allies that the Czechoslovaks represented a national political entity.⁴⁷ On 7 February 1918, the Czech Legion was proclaimed as an autonomous part of the Czech Army of the West, and negotiations were begun with the Bolsheviks to allow movement of this element to France.⁴⁸ Masaryk had been thinking ahead when he allowed the Bolshevik propagandists free rein in his camps.

The Czech Legion was centered about Kiev in the Ukraine. The Bolsheviks had been unable to control the nationalists even at the Brest-Litovsk sessions, which made for a separate treaty between the Central Powers and the Ukraine. Bolshevik control was nominal against General L. G. Kornilov's southeastern army of 2,500 soldiers on the Don, Ataman Dutov's Cossacks around Orenburg, and the invading German and Austrian armies. These alone consisted of twelve to sixteen divisions employing Ukrainians in the vanguards as sharpshooters.⁴⁹ The Czech's best opportunity was to evacuate the Dneiper River area. The 1st Czech Division reached Kiev on 1 March by force marching. Once linked-up with the other division, this force moved towards Kursk while the 2nd Czech Division headed towards Poltava. The Czechs successfully engaged the leading German elements from 9-13 March near Bakhmach, allowing the withdrawal of the entire corps in perfect order. This action was the Czech's only contact with regular German forces.⁵⁰

The Czechs moved northward following the railway. Trains were commandeered along the way as insurance for evacuation. The movement of the Czech divisions attracted prisoners from nearby camps requesting enlistment. All were accepted whether or not they possessed weapons. When the trains were filled to overflowing the remainder were told to go to

Penza where a recruiting station for the Second Army Corps was to be established.⁵¹

The early stages of Czech movement were marked by an atmosphere of tension and mistrust. The Germans were charging the Bolsheviks with violating the treaty arrangements for allowing the Czechs to proceed. The Czechs were afraid that the Bolsheviks would renege and intern them somewhere. The Bolsheviks doubted the good faith of the Czechs because they were associated with the French and were capable of becoming a very effective counterrevolutionary force in Russia. As the Czechs gained control of various sections of the railways, the Bolsheviks became more and more alarmed. Finally, they ordered the Czechs to surrender the bulk of their arms and to dismiss their Russian officers on 25 May 1918, as stipulation for unobstructed passage along the Trans-Siberian Railway.⁵² From this point on, the fate of the Czech Legion became inextricably tied to the final Allied decision to intervene in Russia.

The British policy towards the prisoners after the armistice was directed at two areas: north Russia after intervention in April, 1918, and Turkestan. The British recruited the majority of their troop strength in north Russia from the various nationalities in the area and utilized the available war prisoners as dockworkers. In Turkestan, the Bolsheviks armed 5,000 of the nearly 35,000 prisoners of war in that region in order to control the steppes and the Afghan frontier at Kushk. The relative weakness of the Bolshevik government authorities in that region without the support of the international units prompted the British to agitate for prompt repatriation of the German and Turkish prisoners. Sensing these motives, the Bolsheviks obstructed Danish and Swedish Red Cross attempts to negotiate the prisoner exchanges.⁵³ The Bolsheviks feared

British encouragement of the Afghans to invade Russia during this vulnerable period. Instead, the Bolsheviks urged the Afghans to attack the British in the south.⁵⁴ The British were most concerned about a threat to India which would divert critical resources from the western front.

American policy towards the prisoners after the armistice was basically one of watchful waiting. The exploits of the Czech Legion had attracted little attention amongst the diplomats in the field or at home. As American popularity faded in Moscow and Petrograd, the YMCA looked to shift its base to the larger cities in Siberia. This would enable them to continue their war prisoner work and to assist the American railway workers. The YMCA played a minor role in maintaining a shaky neutrality between the Czechs and the Bolsheviks.⁵⁵

It would be nearly two years after the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk before a large-scale evacuation of prisoners would start. The Bolsheviks did not open the boundary between Russia and Germany until almost two years after the final armistice. This failure prevented formal repatriation of the war prisoners until 1920. By that time, less than half the prisoners originally reported as interned could be accounted for to conduct a formal repatriation. Many had settled down to quiet peasant life while others found their calling as artisans and laborers. The acute shortages of manpower caused by the war was a further inducement to remain.

The prisoner of war situation after the Russian armistice introduced a very powerful force for intervention which originated from the ranks of the war prisoners, the Czech Legion. The Bolsheviks were not the first Russian regime to recruit and propagandize war prisoners. Conditions in the prison camps made limited options appear to be godsent opportunities. The Americans, along with the other Allies, the Russians,

and the Germans recognized the potential afforded by utilizing prisoner assets. The prisoners had been exploited throughout the war, but their real significance was not acknowledged until after the Russian armistice, when the Allies were faced with the possibility that the Central Powers would benefit from the situation. The role most misunderstood was that of the Bolsheviks, who took the lead in proselytizing the prisoners, Russian recruiting was further obscured by the anti-Bolsheviks, who saw all Russian acts as linked closely to, if not directed by, the Central Powers. These misunderstandings and misperceptions would play a key role in the decision by the Allies to intervene in Russia.

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FROM BREST-LITOVSK TO THE SUMMER OFFENSIVE

The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was signed between Russia and the Central Powers on 3 March 1918, changing the entire context of the prisoner of war problem for the Allies. Article II prohibited agitation or propaganda against the state or military institutions of either party. Article VIII provided for the release of war prisoners and repatriation. Article XII dealt with the settlement of prisoner questions which arose from the special separate treaties.¹ One should recall that the Ukraine as a separate sovereign nation had already signed a formal treaty with the Central Powers on 9 February 1918, covering the same basic issues.²

The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was extremely harsh. Russia would lose approximately 300,000 square miles of territory, nearly 32 percent of her population, 33 percent of her agricultural land, and 50 percent of her industrial capability.³ The loss of half her industrial capability included 89 percent of the coal producing regions and 73 percent of her iron ore deposits. To enforce these conditions and exploit the potential wealth required General Erich von Ludendorff to detail 800,000 troops for occupation duty in Russia and the Ukraine.⁴ The acceptance of these terms served to convince many that V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky were indeed German agents.

During the months of March and April, the volume of U.S. diplomatic message traffic is the heaviest for the entire study period. The total in March reached 34 while April peaked the survey at 43. The ratio of messages from the field to those emanating from Washington was two to one in March, and in April the ratio jumped to ten to one. The overall

effect was to swamp the State Department with confusing reports which further heightened tensions.

The largest number of field reports emanated from Peking and were directly related to Major Walter Drysdale's investigations in Siberia. A summary of the military attaché's reports is most revealing. On 28 February at Khabarovsk, Drysdale stated that the population was vehemently anti-German as a result of the harsh peace agreements and the continued advance of the German armies into Russia. Hence, the prisoners in that area were well guarded.⁵ Sometime after the 28 February message and Drysdale's next dispatch (which was undated but received in Washington on 16 March), Acting Secretary Frank Polk asked for further verification of the military attaché's findings. Polk duly instructed the field representatives on 2 March 1918:

Please instruct consuls in your jurisdiction to report actual conditions, facts, and occurrences in Siberia and along line of railroad, with particular regard to disturbances, releasing, and organizing and arming prisoners, actions of character hostile to our aims, German or pro-German activities, etc.

The Department wants opinions and prognostications but needs specific instances and real facts in order to properly consider developments and formulate policies.⁶

Whether Drysdale received the Acting Secretary's guidance is unknown. The military attaché continued to furnish the information required. At Nikolsk, Drysdale discovered 1,200 unarmed prisoners under little restraint. The Nikolsk Soviet was propagandizing the prisoners and stated that the prisoners would be armed by them in an emergency. The 3,500 war prisoners at Spasskoe were properly guarded and their probability of being armed by the Soviets was slim.⁷ The prisoners at Chita and to the north were reported as being armed and "committing misdeeds."⁸ At Irkutsk, a trainload of 500 armed Hungarian prisoners from Omsk had stopped enroute to fight General Semenov. The initial elements

were followed by 500 Internationalists. Major Drysdale interviewed the prisoners and found that the number of actual war prisoners helping the Bolsheviks was greater than that provided by the local Soviet.⁹ On 29 March Drysdale met Captains W. L. Hicks and William B. Webster, the Bolshevik-backed investigators from Moscow, in Irkutsk. Eight hundred prisoners had been observed enroute to Dauria to fight Semenov. The local Soviets were arming prisoners against Semenov because he was considered to be an international element interfering in the domestic affairs of Russia.¹⁰ The Drysdale reports contain significant information concerning the prisoners. Large groups of unarmed prisoners were roaming about free in several regions. The Bolsheviks were propagandizing the prison camps and were arming prisoners willing to fight the counterrevolutionaries. Armed prisoners were marauding in the Chita area. Recruiting efforts to form Internationalist units were progressing quite satisfactorily, with adequate railway support being provided to move the mobilized units. Major Drysdale's accounts and impressions were objective and were not alarmist in tone.

Willing Spencer, Secretary of the Ministry at Peking, had been responsible for forwarding the majority of Major Drysdale's reports to Washington. In this position, Spencer sought to comply with Frank Polk's instructions of 2 March. A second message from Polk asked for even more specifics:

How many prisoners have been released? How many are armed? Where did they get arms? What proportions Austrians to Germans? How are they officered? Send as many facts as obtainable and please continue so to send.¹¹

Polk's second message prompted Spencer to send all rumors and Allied source information that were readily available: there were 2,000 armed prisoners at Irkutsk; the Russian Legation stated that Austrian and

Turkish prisoners were not active unless German-inspired. Spencer admitted that most of the information from the French consul general at Irkutsk was slightly colored by a desire for immediate Japanese intervention. However, Willing Spencer felt that "it would be impossible for him to exaggerate the seriousness of the situation." He related that in Priamur district there were 14,000 prisoners of which 4,800 were officers; the ratio was three Austrians to one German. In the Transbaikal there were about 25,000, and in western Siberia about 30,000 prisoners. These numbers reflected only those in camps because it was impossible to estimate the numbers working on the economy.¹² Another message from Spencer containing French information had 1,000 Austrians being equipped by the Bolsheviks with machine guns and uniforms. These Omsk prisoners were intending to fight Semenov and the Allies if they intervened.¹³

Elsewhere in the Far East, other sources reported on the prisoners. Consul Charles A. Moser at Harbin in Manchuria attributed the setbacks suffered by General Semenov as being the result of accurate Bolshevik artillery fire delivered by German gunners.¹⁴ Additionally, Moser detailed his vice consul, William Morton, to accompany Major Drysdale in Siberia. Moser admitted the difficulty in providing specifics to Counselor Polk but continued to pass on second-hand information from the French at Irkutsk.¹⁵ Douglas Jenkins in Harbin reported that 400 Austrians from Chita had joined the Red Guard.¹⁶ William Morton forwarded information on the prisoner population in six camps in Siberia. Of the 12,000 prisoners in the camps, the Germans only comprised 2,500. Morton did not believe that any were armed except when they joined the Red Guards. His was the most specific report giving places and numbers:

Nikolsk, 1240 prisoners; Spaaskoe, 3491 prisoners; Rasdolnoe, 100; Khabarovsk, 4200 (3,000 officers); Krasnoia Retchka, 1287; and

Blagoveschensk, 1798.¹⁷

William M. Palmer, the vice consul at Irkutsk, added to Major Drysdale's reports that the "war prisoners are armed and organized."¹⁸

It is interesting to note that despite the demand for specifics, and the resulting generalities from the field, the State Department continued to accept the "junk" from the field. The field reports appeared to increase tensions, and the demand for more information caused the sources to distort the few reliable facts available. Counselor Frank Polk perceived the prisoner threat as an obstacle to reforming another eastern front in Russia. The Chief of the Russian Desk in the State Department, Basil Miles, had dealt with the German and Austrian prisoners at Moscow before America entered the war. Miles was able to substantiate many of the numbers and locations of the prison camps. Secretary Lansing preferred to deal directly with Ambassador Francis on Russian issues. Lansing was most concerned about the prisoners as a threat to control of the Trans-Siberian Railway, to him the key in dealing with the Bolsheviks and maintenance of trade with Siberia. With these sentiments each senior officer sought to reinforce his notions by querying the field for extensive details on the prisoners.

The Vladivostok consulate sent one of the most controversial messages concerning the prisoner of war issue. The American consul at Irkutsk, David B. Macgowan, reported to Ambassador Francis that a trainload of 2,000 prisoners armed with machine guns had passed through enroute eastward. The critical portion of the report was:

Informant hitherto reliable states German Major General and other officers with thirty pioneers had arrived. The general staff was expected from Petrograd to direct bridge and tunnel destruction and plan defenses. German, Turkish and Austrian officers at times throng station and streets with insignia of rank visible beneath Russian military overcoats. Every prisoner whether at large or in camp has

a rifle....¹⁹

The message at face value purported German organized operations with armed prisoners roaming the streets of Irkutsk. As further support of its authenticity Willing Spencer in Peking added to this report that the German prisoners were continuing to assemble and arm themselves.²⁰ John K. Caldwell at Vladivostok cited from a Russian officer source that the prisoners in Irkutsk had imprisoned their officers and were enroute eastward.²¹ A newly appointed consul at Vladivostok, J. Butler Wright, added his observation:

...Little or no direct supervision of Austrian and German prisoners was noticed and they appeared to have almost complete freedom of movement in the cities where their camps are located. I saw none armed and likewise confirmation of any united action by them as yet....Austrians appeared more numerous but more dejected than Germans and inferior in health and in general appearance.²²

With the heavy volume of prisoner reports coming from Vladivostok and Peking, the comments of Colonel George H. Emerson, Commander of the Russian Railway Service Corps in Tokyo, should have been overlooked. Emerson told Secretary Lansing that the armed prisoners at Irkutsk and Chita would limit his stationing of railway units unless troops were provided to protect them.²³ This perceived threat to the continued operation of the railroads became increasingly important. The Vice Consul, William M. Palmer, had reported attempts to control the Amur Railway at Blagoveshchensk and the organization of Austrian and German prisoners in the vicinity of Khabarovsk. This information had been verified through the Russian Legation at Peking.²⁴

Reports from Russia proper were limited to Moscow and Vologda, the new home of Ambassador David R. Francis. Maddin Summers, the consul general in Moscow, felt that the Bolsheviks were capable of seizing and controlling the railroads with prisoner assistance.²⁵ A new consul at

Moscow, Roger C. Treadwell, reported that Danish Red Cross workers in Siberia had told him that relief money was given only to those prisoners who supported the local Soviets, and that many believed the rumor of 20,000 armed prisoners being in Petrograd. Ambassador Francis contributed to the Irkutsk picture by reporting that the prisoners at Irkutsk were being armed, organized, and led by German officers under orders from Petrograd.²⁷

It was in this same message that Francis casually mentioned that Colonel Raymond Robins was sending a two-man team with a Bolshevik interpreter to look into the prisoner of war issue. Robins had told him that Leon Trotsky had requested the action. Ambassador Francis commented later upon the motives for the mission.

...Trotsky denies prisoners being armed and Robins credits denial saying Russian officer and Webster with British officer who enroute Irkutsk to investigate going only to convince me that reports of prisoners organizing are untrue.

He added that the report that prisoners in Irkutsk were armed had been confirmed by Hugh Moran, the YMCA representative in Siberia, giving it additional credence.²⁸

In Washington, the Secretary of State attempted to deal with the vast volume of message traffic on the prisoners of war by asking specific questions in order to better assess the sources being provided by the Allied embassies in the capital. These messages obviously influenced Secretary Lansing, and he told Ambassador Francis:

If the reports, which persist, that the military prisoners in Siberia are being organized under German officers and have succeeded in occupying Irkutsk are confirmed, we will have a new situation in Siberia which may cause a revision of our policy. It would seem to me, therefore, that we should consider the problem on the hypothesis that reports are true and be prepared to act with promptness.

...The presence of the Germans and the possibility of their control

of Siberia becomes a real menace to the peace of the Far East. The situation of Irkutsk is such that the Germans, if masters of the place, might invade Manchuria and obtain control of the Trans-Siberian Railway.²⁹

Later, Secretary Lansing asked for specifics concerning railway movements, armament of the soldiers along the railway, and the activities and arming of prisoners.³⁰ Previously, acting Secretary Frank Polk had directed his queries to the Far Eastern posts. Lansing chose to deal directly with his main representative in Russia, the ambassador.

The Third Assistant Secretary of State, Breckenridge Long, gave his superior a memorandum of a discussion with the former Secretary of the Russian Embassy, Mr. John Sookine. Sookine elaborated on the threat to the railroad in Russia by the armed and organizing prisoners near Irkutsk and the Trans-Baikal. He pointed out the existence of a single bridge near the Manchurian border which, if destroyed, would require two years to rebuild in order to restore operation to the Trans-Siberian Railway.³¹ The threat became even more apparent when the Japanese Minister of War released to the international news media an estimate that there were 94,000 prisoners in Siberia to the east of Lake Baikal, and another 60,000 to the west.³²

The French Ambassador to Washington, Jean A. Jusserand, advocated Japanese intervention to reestablish the governments in Irkutsk and Tomsk reportedly driven out with the help of German prisoners. The armed prisoners were not capable of dealing with the "methodical dash of the Japanese."³³ The French mission in Peking had sent its military attaché, Major Pichon, to investigate the prisoner situation as the Americans had done. Pichon confirmed the active role of the German prisoners in recent military and political events in Siberia and emphasized the need to avoid delay in dealing with these elements.³⁴ Jusserand capitalized on Consul

Macgowan's report by stating that American sources confirmed the location of Bolsheviks and armed prisoners all along the Trans-Siberian Railway. Despite Bolshevik denials, the French dispatches confirmed American fears that the threat in Siberia was serious.³⁵

Meanwhile, the British blamed their problems in the Caucasus on efforts by German and Turkish prisoners. These released prisoners were organizing the Tatars to dominate the region between Baku and Tiflis in southern Russia. The prisoners concentrated their efforts in the cities of Elisavetpol, Lenkoran, and Kachmez.³⁶ The Allies were unanimous in citing the prisoner of war problem as a serious matter.

The British saw intervention as the most direct solution to the Russian problem. General Alfred Knox, former British military attaché to Russia, had recommended Allied intervention to the War Cabinet early in the year. His plan included economic assistance mixed with military force to enter Russia from the north, south, and Far East. Occupation of the northern ports was an essential part of the strategy. Efforts in the south would be through Persia towards the Caucasus, Trans-Caspia, and Turkestan to protect the tranquility of India. Knox's basic premises were included in a report given to Secretary Lansing which recommended prompt action to deal with the escalating problem in the Caucasus.³⁷ The Japanese were to fulfill the Far Eastern requirement.³⁸

Great Britain took the lead in direct solution of the Russian problem during March 1918, by sending marines ashore at Murmansk on the 5th. This signalled the beginning of Allied intervention in north Russia. The purpose of the initial expedition was to guard the stockpiled war materials at Murmansk to prevent them from falling into enemy hands. Though the Murmansk venture was the subject of considerable American field

traffic, its justification was not linked to the activities of the war prisoners. None of the American reports connect the issues. Although the British intervened in north Russia to launch the operation and to foster American interest in south Russia, the War Cabinet was split on the issue of Japanese intervention. The Cabinet saw President Wilson as the primary target for British persuasion. General Knox became the military's primary weapon on the War Cabinet to reduce the opposition of David Lloyd George and retired General Jan C. Smuts.³⁹

Sir William Wiseman, Great Britain's special emissary to the United States, sought to project the image of intervention as a humanitarian crusade rather than another military operation.⁴⁰ Colonel Edward House opposed military intervention unless it was at the request of the Russians. House recognized the futility of trying to bolster the fighting spirit in war-torn Russia.⁴¹ President Woodrow Wilson was against the Allied schemes for Japanese-led intervention because of its military impracticality and its antagonizing effect upon the people. Wilson looked to a relief system to help the Russians without allowing commercial interests to exploit the situation.⁴² William Wiseman would have accomplished more by concentrating upon the Secretary of State. Robert Lansing was very alarmed by the reports of the Bolsheviks' arming of war prisoners. He believed the solution was a cooperative expedition with Japan commanding the forces. American support of Knox's plan of Allied intervention was not forthcoming. To the disgruntlement of the British War Cabinet, the special representative of the British in Moscow was against Allied intervention and worked to discredit the primary source of concern in Russia to the Americans, the war prisoners.

R. H. Bruce Lockhart, the special British representative, was

convinced that his nation's secret service agents operating in Russia were the source of the war prisoner scare. He completely discounted the stories that Siberia was filled with regiments of German war prisoners armed by the Bolsheviks. Common sense told him that these reports were a "mare's nest."⁴³ Having developed considerable rapport with the Bolshevik regime, Lockhart joined Raymond Robins in confronting Leon Trotsky with the prisoner allegations. Trotsky recognized the futility of denial and suggested sending an investigation team, to see for themselves. He promised to provide all the support necessary to accomplish the objectives. A special train was made available for departure that same day, 19 March. Robins selected the Red Cross attaché, Captain William B. Webster, because of his previous service on the War Relief Commission dealing with the prisoners of war in 1916-1917.⁴⁴ Lockhart sent his special military assistant, Captain W. L. Hicks, because of his prior service with the British Military Mission, his popularity with the Russians, and his language capabilities. Trotsky provided both officers with personal letters which instructed the local Soviets to render them the fullest assistance to go anywhere and see everything.⁴⁵ A Soviet commissar accompanied the party to insure local compliance with Trotsky's directive. The Foreign Commissar publicly announced the departure and mission of the Allied investigators.

The American ambassador was rather piqued about the Webster-Hicks mission because he was never consulted about the proposal and was not informed of the venture until the men were on their way. Ambassador Francis was quite concerned about the prisoner problem and felt that another inquiry was unnecessary, since Major Drysdale was still working in Siberia.⁴⁷ Francis was even more frustrated when the mission reported

directly to Colonel Robins, technically a subordinate and unofficial government representative, which prevented the Ambassador from receiving all dispatches from the mission.

The worst fears of the American ambassador would be realized if the Webster-Hicks mission refuted the war prisoner issue with concrete evidence. It would allow Colonel Robins and Bruce Lockhart the opportunity to discredit the prisoner scare and the reliability of the American field representatives reporting the problem from the far reaches of Russia. The final blow would be the leakage of the mission's findings to the Bolsheviks and to the American nation at home. The result would be irreparable loss of credibility after much work to analyze the Russian situation and influence the highest levels of American government.

Ambassador Francis' fears were justified. The Bolsheviks announced the mission as being official for the Allies and that the two investigators were American army officers, neither of which was true. The Bolsheviks did receive the final report of the mission, and the findings of the mission were leaked to the Red Cross in the United States by Colonel Robins. The official American investigator, Major Drysdale, was cited as supportive of the mission's findings, which was not the case according to later dispatches.

Enroute to Irkutsk, the military center of Siberia and focal point for prisoner information, Captains Webster and Hicks found no signs of prisoner disturbances. At Perm and Ekaterinburg the investigators were told that a few prisoners had joined the Red Army as Internationalists. Arriving at Irkutsk on 29 March, Webster and Hicks discovered Majors Drysdale and Morton looking into the same problem. Webster and Hicks contended that Drysdale told them that he had found no armed prisoners

throughout the area and the camps were well-guarded. According to George F. Kennan, they cited Drysdale's report as their justification for limiting the extent of their investigation to Irkutsk and its environs.⁴⁸ The dispatches already discussed do not support this contention. When both teams visited the Irkutsk railroad station they discovered a side-tracked train from Omsk which contained 500 Hungarian prisoners. The POW's were going to fight General Semenov on the Manchurian border.⁴⁹ Railroad stations were logical places to obtain information on prisoner movements because rail was the only transportation available to ship large elements.

Edward A. Ross stated that after meeting with Captains Webster and Hicks, Drysdale departed for Peking resolved to report these Hungarian Internationalists as a danger to American interests.⁵⁰ George F. Kennan glossed over a detailed report made by Drysdale prior to departing Irkutsk. Major Drysdale did report that the prisoners were not armed, though a few had been converted to Bolshevism. He concluded, "...We can rest assured that there is no armed organization of Prisoners of War." The Red Guards did use prisoner uniforms to deceive General Semenov at Dauria. The success of this guise caused Semenov to threaten to kill all the prisoners at Dauria. To protect the prisoners the Bolsheviks evacuated them to Chita and Kroniarik.⁵¹

Webster and Hicks proceeded to investigate further at Chita, Dauria, Krasnoyarsk, and Omsk, by visiting the prisoner camps and interviewing Allied representatives, Swedish and Danish Red Cross Workers, the YMCA men working the camps, the Soviets in charge, and the war prisoners.⁵² The basic nature of the Webster-Hicks mission discounted the prisoner of war scare and prisoners' potential threat as Internationalists controlled by Berlin. If Webster and Hicks understood

the impact of Bolshévik propaganda and recruiting amongst the prisoners, nowhere were they discussed. Little did they realize the growing international concern about the prisoners of war interned in Russia.

While Washington resisted the French and British pressures to expand the intervention to Siberia, the Japanese were proceeding along an independent course. To demonstrate concern about the "invasion of Chinese territory by Bolsheviks and organized German war prisoners," Tokyo publicized its intention to send an independent Japanese force to protect the Manchurian border. This was despite the fact that the Chinese categorically denied the allegation.⁵³ Earlier the War Minister had publicized the existence of large numbers of prisoners on both sides of Lake Baikal. Germany became alarmed by the noisy demonstrations from Tokyo. The German war prisoner commission demanded repatriation preference for the Siberian prisoners because of the danger of capture by a Japanese-led Allied expedition in Siberia.⁵⁴

The prisoner of war issue had a decided effect on the State Department in March. Its role would continue to expand through the month of April to sway even the most recalcitrant opponents of intervention.

APRIL, 1918

As the German spring offensive reached its height in April, so did message traffic on the prisoner issue. Of the total of 43, the ratio of field messages to headquarters directives was ten to one. The Far Eastern posts provided the bulk of transmissions, as they had in March.

On 5 April, the Japanese landed 500 marines at Vladivostok to begin the Siberian intervention. The British quickly followed suit and landed

50 marines to protect their consulate and citizens. Japanese justified their action by citing the inability of the Soviet to maintain law and order with the resulting murder of three Japanese merchants.⁵⁵

The Russian response to this invasion had considerable bearing upon later diplomatic reports. The acting Commissar of Foreign Affairs, George Chicherin, queried the Allied governments concerning their attitudes toward the Japanese action at Vladivostok. None of the Allies replied.⁵⁶ When the British landed at Murmansk, the Bolsheviks had lent tacit approval to the intervention. Vladimir I. Lenin addressed the Japanese landing at Vladivostok by saying, "...Germany is strangling us, Japan is attacking us....We do not reject the use of force by us against the exploiters...."⁵⁷ This virtually eliminated Colonel Edward House's hope for "invited intervention." The Soviet government press release on the Vladivostok landing stated that the Japanese had used the Siberian conditions and role of the German prisoners of war as pretexts for this incursion into Russia.⁵⁸ V. I. Lenin early recognized the implications of the intervention and its inevitable Allied character. The following is his directive to the Vladivostok Soviet:

We consider the situation very serious...Do not harbor any illusions: the Japanese will certainly attack. That is inevitable. Probably all the Allies without exception will help them....Attention must be devoted to correct withdrawal, retreat, and removal of stores and railway materials....Prepare to sap and blow up railway lines, and to remove rolling stock and locomotives; prepare minefields around Irkutsk or in the Transbaikalian area....⁵⁹

The actions Lenin directed were later reported by Ambassador Francis and Consul General Maddin Summers as being German plans. These plans were perceived as a definite threat to the Trans-Siberian Railway with its many bridges and tunnels.

Major Walter Drysdale provided the most reliable source of

information on the prisoners. One of the key factors to POW control according to Drysdale was the ratification of the peace terms by the Siberian Soviets. Nonratification of the agreements eliminated the prisoner menace in the Priamur district and reduced the probability of supplies reaching Germany from eastern Siberia. However, if the terms were ratified Drysdale saw the need to occupy Siberia with Allied troops as far west as the Ural Mountains to prevent repatriation and add support to the economic assistance being provided the counterrevolutionaries.⁶⁰ Major Drysdale was careful to qualify his impressions in an attempt to provide consistent, objective reports on the prisoner situation. In a 2 April report, Drysdale stated that there were 1,500 armed prisoners around Irkutsk, with the Bolsheviks conducting extensive propagandization amongst the camps. He saw the prisoners as a positive menace because the Minister of War, Leon Trotsky, had lost control of them. Drysdale wanted the Soviets to regain control over the prisoners immediately. If Trotsky was unwilling to accommodate, the solution was immediate Allied intervention.⁶¹

Investigators of controversial matters have a tendency to become personally involved, which creates the possibility of distorting facts with personal impressions when an issue is obscure. Drysdale was no exception. He concluded that the sole motive for Bolshevik arming of prisoners was for them to fight General Semenov on the Manchurian border. He explained the assembly of German prisoners of war at Irkutsk as preparatory efforts by the repatriation commission. Drysdale also recognized the possible source of confusion when former prisoners who had joined the Red Guards were armed in Irkutsk to guard the ammunition dumps and military equipment warehouses. But, "...this fact makes it possible that prisoners of

war in large bodies may be armed even by German agents. However, we are unable to find a single armed German prisoner of war and I believe that practically no German prisoners of war are armed...." This apparent contradiction is another example of Drysdale qualifying his statements. The rest of the report provided prisoner population data:

Irkutsk Military District - 23,000 prisoners of which 1,000 to 1,500 are armed.

Priamur District - 13,000 prisoners

Western Siberia - over 100,000 prisoners (Indications were that there were more armed prisoners at Omsk and in this area.)⁶²

The Russian officer who accompanied Major Drysdale from Peking, Colonel N. Speshneff, provided a thorough appreciation of the prisoner of war issue to the State Department, but he was ignored by those who sought to dramatize the POW issue:

...At the time when the peace was undecided the question of German war prisoners interfering as Bolshevik supporters was hardly to be expected....The Far East Bolsheviks must consider the German war prisoners as enemies to their cause....The Bolsheviks in Irkutsk and Chita are in accord with the war prisoners and we must expect the same in the Priamur region....We must recognize as a matter of fact that the assistance of German war prisoners must be foreseen in the case of foreign intervention....We might even say that the possibility of foreign intervention is drawing the war prisoners into the ranks of the Bolsheviks in spite of opposite political views.⁶³

Major Drysdale discussed the 8,000 man International Battalion of Omsk in his 24 April report. This unit was made up almost entirely of Hungarian war prisoners who were going to fight General Semenov. Drysdale discounted the potential menace of the war prisoners in this message:

...It seems farfetched to consider the prisoners of war a real military menace in view of the fact that it is clearly indicated that they are acting defensively and at most are prepared to support the cause of labor against any reactionary force. At present it seems clear that the armed prisoners cannot be considered as a military force controlled by German or Austria or even that the arming of prisoners was due to German or Austrian influence.⁶⁴

This quote illustrates the clarity of Drysdale's analyses. The problem was his contradictory impressions on the threat posed by the prisoners.

Drysdale's qualifications on many pronouncements were overlooked generally, but there is no indication that anyone in the field or at Washington called him to task for the often disparate dispatches.

During April, Minister Reinsch at Peking changed his evaluation of the prisoner threat, based upon Major Drysdale's findings and reports from two British officers recently returned from Siberia. Reinsch believed that there was no evidence of a concerted plan on the part of the Germans to control Siberia through the prisoners, nor was such a plan feasible. He confirmed that earlier reports about armed prisoners had been exaggerated, most of them having come from a single source in Irkutsk. The Bolsheviks had had little success in recruiting German prisoners into the International units; most enlistees were Austrians.⁶⁵ This supports Drysdale's qualified report that he believed "practically no German prisoners of war are armed." In another message Reinsch, admitted the inability to verify a concentration of prisoners around Irkutsk. This contradicted Drysdale's report. Additionally, he saw the armed prisoners in Irkutsk as Internationalists, and the mined bridges between Manchouli and Chita as defensive measures against General Semenov.⁶⁶

The assessments of Major Drysdale and Minister Reinsch after a more thorough investigation of the prisoner situation did not affect perceptions in Washington, especially those of the Secretary of State. Robert Lansing told Ambassador Francis that the reports of Major Drysdale proved "...conclusively that prisoners of war in Siberia are arming and getting beyond control."⁶⁷ While passing this impression to Francis in Russia, Secretary Lansing was querying Minister Reinsch in Peking to verify his many reports received from numerous sources. Specifically, he wanted to know if the farmers and Austrian prisoners in Siberia were

providing supplies at the railway stations; if there were no armed prisoners in western Siberia; if German officers had arrived at Irkutsk to organize the large concentrations of prisoners there; if preparations had been made to destroy the bridges and tunnels at Irkutsk in the event of Allied intervention; and finally, if returning prisoners were being stopped at Omsk and redirected back to Irkutsk.⁶⁸ These two messages clearly illustrate the confusion in the State Department on the prisoner of war issue based on improper association of rumors with facts.

At Harbin, Manchuria, American perceptions of the prisoner threat were different. J. Butler Wright announced that "reports of activities of German-Austrian prisoners increase. German menace and endeavor is certainly and rapidly growing."⁶⁹ Douglas Jenkins verified that the Bolsheviks were arming prisoners to oppose Allied intervention.⁷⁰ The Chairman of the Advisory Commission of Railway Experts to Russia, John F. Stevens, emphasized the closing of the railroad between Manchuria and Chita because of a strong force of Bolsheviks and prisoners.⁷¹ Alfred R. Thomson reported from Omsk that there were 1,000 armed prisoners under German officers in the city. At Chita the local Soviet had decreed the freedom of all prisoners of war in that region.⁷² Consul David Macgowan protested to the Danish legation in Irkutsk about the arming of prisoners. He demanded their immediate disarmament and return to camp control.⁷³ Later he reported the takeover of Tomsk by Red Guard units composed mainly of Hungarian prisoners. These prisoners were carrying out arrests and seizures of requisitioned material. Among those arrested for refusal to pay requisitions was the Singer Company agent in that city.⁷⁴

While reports from the Orient were becoming more temperate the picture provided from Moscow supported the alarmist theories concerning

the prisoners. Captain E. Francis Riggs, the assistant military attaché, reported from Moscow that Ukrainian-Teutonic battalions were being formed by the Germans.⁷⁵ The Soviets later confirmed this information when these units passed Perekop enroute to Simferopol in the Crimea, just outside the Ukrainian Republic.⁷⁶ These were the units which General Ludendorff hoped would assist the Germans in the conquest of the Ukraine. These former war prisoner battalions later proved quite unsuccessful and became an embarrassment to the Central Powers.

The consul general at Moscow, Maddin Summers, relayed the German concern over the POW revolutionary committees which had been formed in the camps at Tomsk, Omsk, and Ekaterinburg. The Germans contended that these Internationalists were preventing the repatriation of the Omsk prisoners and blocking further prisoner traffic to the west. Specifically, the Germans demanded:

1. Disarmament of Omsk prisoners and provision of reliable security troops to preclude further propagandizing.
2. Russians to reassume the administration of the camps immediately at Omsk and Ekaterinburg until the arrival of the repatriation commissions.
3. Segregation of German and Austrian prisoners in separate camps.
4. Reestablishment of officer rank to those deposed.
5. Occupation of Omsk railway station by Russian forces responsible for all prisoners arriving from eastern and central Siberia.
6. Discontinuation of further prisoner of war congresses.

The Soviets replied that they were following the Brest-Litovsk provisions and that all prisoners possessed the same rights as Russian citizens, allowing them to meet as they wished.⁷⁷ The majority of the German allegations were true except the prevention of German repatriation efforts. Later, it was discovered that the Czechs were the real culprits responsible for stopping the repatriation trains, etc. Leon Trotsky mollified the critics by sending out a reminder, which was published in Izvestia, to the local military authorities on the proper handling of war prisoners.⁷⁸

Ambassador Francis in Vologda was rather isolated from his field representatives as well as from the Webster-Hicks investigation team. Francis quoted the Webster report that only 1,200 prisoners were armed, though the Soviets planned to accept all volunteers to resist Japanese invasion, should it come.⁷⁹ When Francis passed on the available reports from Captains Webster and Hicks, he qualified them by stating that they gave a different impression about conditions in Siberia than those received from his consulars.⁸⁰ After Consul David Macgowan told the ambassador that Webster and Hicks were reluctant to visit Omsk to investigate, the ambassador told Washington that the Webster-Hicks group was disposed "as in other matters" to accept Bolshevik assurances about the situation.⁸¹ Francis wanted to hammer the pro-Bolshevik image of the mission home in order to preserve the credibility of himself and his consular corps. In another message to Secretary Lansing, Ambassador Francis gave his views on the purpose of the Webster-Hicks mission and on the questionable character responsible for its dispatch by the Soviets, Robins. Francis believed that Webster and Hicks were sent by the Soviets to investigate Macgowan's reports to him through Maddin Summers. He saw Robins as the culprit who furnished them to the Soviets. Francis described Robins as "intense and sincere in everything and he is now as earnest in support of Soviet as he was opposed to them before...even saying 'we' when speaking of Soviets." He concluded by recommending immediate Allied intervention.⁸²

At the conclusion of their six week trip, Captains Webster and Hicks paid a courtesy call upon the American ambassador. They stated that there were not more than 1,000 prisoners armed and showed Francis a written guarantee from the Siberian Soviet that the maximum number to be armed in an emergency would not exceed 6,500. They described Consul Macgowan

as having a newspaper instinct which caused him to report every rumor, which resulted in erroneous impressions. They did affirm that the prisoners would be armed under their own officers to oppose the Japanese.⁸³ In their final report Webster and Hicks arrived at certain conclusions based upon three facts which "differed materially from those set forth by Allied consular reports and other sources of information in Siberia:"

1. The Allied consuls at Irkutsk were unanimously anti-Bolshevik and would have nothing to do with the Soviets.
2. Allied consuls' sources of information were extremely biased against the Soviet position.
3. The consuls appeared to find no time to investigate and verify any of their reports before dispatch.⁸⁴

The ambassador forwarded their reports without comment, believing that he had already limited much of Webster and Hicks' credibility. The Soviets and Raymond Robins were very pleased with the findings of the two officers.

Shortly after his arrival in Russia the new French Ambassador, Joseph Noulens, had an interview with the Russian press which added a confusing note to the POW issue. Noulens cited the Webster-Hicks report as basis for not regarding the war prisoners in Siberia as dangerous. His conclusion was that only those German prisoners opposed to German imperialism would remain in Russia as Internationalists.⁸⁵ Ambassador Noulens' comments had been rather jumbled as evidenced by the comments made by George Chicherin afterwards.

Particularly strange is his assertion that Germany, by means of its prisoners, is trying to organize colonization centers in Siberia. American officers have just come back from Siberia, where they personally convinced themselves that no danger whatever threatens the Allies from the German prisoners of war....⁸⁶

It is difficult to understand what Ambassador Noulens meant, except that he continued to perceive the prisoner problem as a German-supported threat to the Allies.

The Czechs made the news with Professor Thomas G. Masaryk's decision to journey to the United States to win that nation's support of the Czech Legion and the independence of the Czecho-Slovak peoples. As he passed through Tokyo, Masaryk furnished Ambassador Roland Morris with a copy of his "private and confidential" memorandum to President Woodrow Wilson. For some unknown reason, the ambassador paraphrased the memorandum when he forwarded it to Washington. The pertinent part dealt with the Czech leader's observations concerning the prisoners in Siberia. Morris mentioned that Masaryk was:

...convinced that as yet there is no organized German influence in eastern Siberia. Saw no evidence anywhere of organization of German and Austrian prisoners. Thinks it possible that Bolsheviki, with aid and sympathy of Allies could organize within a year a substantial army to oppose German aggression. Fears that Japanese intervention would result in conflict with Bolshevik movement and permanently estrange Russia from Allies.⁸⁷

The actual memorandum did not really portray the same impression. The original text changes one's perspective considerably:

(12) Nowhere in Siberia did I see, between March 15 and April 2, armed German and Austrian prisoners.

(13) (c) The Germans influence the Russian press less through journalistic agents than through German prisoners of war who write for all kinds of papers throughout the country, especially in the smaller towns. Our Czech soldiers are counteracting their influence to some extent...

(13) (f) The Germans are known to have influenced prisoners of war...by training Ukrainian prisoners for the Ukrainian army. The Allies might influence the German and Austrian prisoners who remain in Russia by means of the press and special agents...

(13) (g) The Czechoslovaks are the most westerly Slav barrier against Germany and Austria...⁸⁸

How Masaryk could say that he saw no organization of prisoners anywhere is strange, when he was forced to allow the Bolshevik propaganda teams into his camps to recruit Internationalists. The Czech leader also wrote this memorandum prior to the Bolshevik orders to halt all Czech trains to allow faster westward movement of Siberian prisoners.⁸⁹

In their dealings with the Bolsheviks, the British were the most opportunistic of the Allies. They sent a special mission to Siberia in April to investigate the economic conditions and the state of natural resources. This group was headed by a millionaire, H. E. Metcalf, who had considerable Russian investments. It proposed the founding of an international consortium of Allied nations to channel competition amongst the nations in Siberia towards a profitable solution, while meeting the military and economic needs of Siberia.⁹⁰

As the war persisted in going badly for the Allies on the western front, Minister Arthur J. Balfour renewed his campaign for intervention by pressuring the United States. He reminded the Americans that the Germans had an additional forty divisions on the western front as a result of the Russian collapse and contended that the war would be even further prolonged if the Germans captured Russian food sources. The Foreign Secretary urged the Americans to seek Russian consent to a joint American-Japanese intervention. Colonel Edward House seemed to think that the President might respond favorably to a proposal for joint intervention upon invitation.⁹¹ What both individuals failed to realize was the damage already done by the unilateral Japanese intervention at Vladivostok. As he had stated earlier in the month, Lenin would never consent to inviting invasion by the Japanese. In the minds of the British, the far-reaching German invasions had removed the primary international legal obligation of the Allies to keep their hands off Russia. The principal question involved was whether intervention would promote victory over the Germans and whether the failure to intervene would expose the Allies to further military hazards.⁹² The specter of a German-Russian union made a mockery of the British blockade and threatened disaster to England

in the postwar economic competition.⁹³

The arrival of the Webster-Hicks report in late April, during the highpoint of the German successes on the western front, prevented their findings from being included in any of the British policy memoranda at the time. In fact, after receiving his final dispatch, the War Office sought the recall of Captain Hicks from Bruce Lockhart's small staff.⁹⁴

In the American community, the controversy between Ambassador David R. Francis and Colonel Raymond Robins of the Red Cross was fast coming to a head. The Webster-Hicks reports had been given very little credence because of Francis' efforts to discredit the mission. Ambassador Francis had discovered that Robins had leaked the reports to the Soviets, and to a friend in the United States. The controversy grew with the ambassador's distrust of Colonel Robins' impartiality on the Russian scene.⁹⁵ Historian William A. Williams contends that Ambassador Francis was determined at all costs to avoid collaboration with the Soviets and to keep Robins ignorant of his basic goal - overthrow of the Soviets.⁹⁶ Colonel Robins could not have helped but discern the American ambassador's sentiments towards the Soviets. As the unofficial liaison with the Soviets, Ambassador Francis had made Robins privy to the majority of the State Department traffic and policy recommendations. Williams incorrectly concluded that Minister Paul Reinsch's comments on the prisoners of war not constituting a real threat were based on the Webster-Hicks reports. This was not the case. The only source which Reinsch assessed was Major Drysdale's findings. There is no indication that Reinsch had access to any of the dispatches of Webster and Hicks, since Francis lacked a complete set. Thus, Williams' conclusion that Reinsch's analysis of the Webster-Hicks reports put an end "even to Lansing's conditional and hypothetical

worry about the prisoners of war" is incorrect.⁹⁷

Raymond Robins had a penchant for doing things without informing the American embassy in Russia until little could be done to influence his actions. In March, Robins had cabled the former head of the Red Cross in Russia, William Boyce Thompson, that Russian fear of a Japanese invasion had prompted ratification of the peace treaty. Robins saw the continuation of Japanese aggression as a reason for the Soviets to succumb to German domination. The Siberian war prisoner scare was perpetrated by skillful German propaganda, as was the idea that Moscow and Petrograd were German-controlled. If the Americans believed these rumors in Washington, all plans for cooperation with the Soviets were doomed. Robins' leaking of information and impressions to nongovernmental sources clearly disturbed the American ambassador when he was provided a copy of the correspondence late in April.⁹⁸ Colonel Robins had a knack for irritating the American ambassador. For example, the senior diplomat requested verification of a report that the Germans were only exchanging invalid prisoners from Germany for able-bodied prisoners in Russia. After conferring with the Foreign Commissar Chicherin, Robins replied, "Treaty terms clear. Parity treatment specified. Probably another fantastic rumor."⁹⁹ This response only served to further pique Ambassador Francis in his isolation at Vologda.

April had brought Japanese and British landings at Vladivostok, the introduction of British economic specialists into Siberia, reports of Germans using Ukrainien prisoners in their southern campaign, heavy pressure on the western front by the Central Powers, and a flood of American message traffic concerning the prisoners. The American most influenced by the prisoner traffic in Washington was Secretary of State Lansing.

Robert Lansing was so disturbed by the potential POW threat that he saw a joint intervention led by the Japanese as the only viable solution to the problem. President Wilson remained reluctant to become involved militarily and saw no feasible long range answer in Japanese-led intervention. His trusted confidant, Colonel Edward House, saw a possible solution in Allied intervention by Russian invitation. This hope was most unrealistic, based upon Lenin's reaction to the Japanese landing at Vladivostok. The investigators in Siberia provided good information and better conclusions concerning the POW's than they had done previously. The Russian sources emanating from Moscow and Vologda continued to be anti-Bolshevist and alarmist on the prisoner of war issue. The Webster-Hicks reports and the memorandum prepared by Professor Thomas Masaryk arrived too late to have an impact in Washington and were generally overlooked. Despite the heavy volume of traffic from the field, Washington demanded little verification of information, and its reaction tended to spawn more unfounded rumors and questionable analysis. Allied reaction was tempered primarily by the exigencies of the situation on the western front. The Americans and Japanese could afford to watch and deliberate upon the significance of the prisoner problem.

MAY, 1918

The volume of message traffic on the prisoners of war subsided like the sigh of relief felt by the Allies when the spring offensive of the Central Powers ground to a halt in May. All traffic emanated from the field during May, and the total dropped to thirteen dispatches. In addition to the regular contributors in the Far East and Russia, the American Ambassador to France, William G. Sharp, provided support for the

Allied urgings for intervention.

From Peking Minister Paul Reinsch relayed the impressions of a recent returnee from Siberia, a Major Barrows, much of whose information had been provided by General Gregory Semenov's forces. The Bolsheviks had 2,100 prisoners, mostly Hungarians, fighting with them against Semenov. Based on these findings, Minister Reinsch felt that the entire far eastern situation required immediate international action to prevent serious consequences in that region.¹⁰⁰ Charles K. Moser, the consul at Harbin, discussed Semenov's claim to have eliminated an Austrian battery of artillery supporting the Bolsheviks. The Chinese were taking steps to reduce Semenov's 2,500 man force by 400 soldiers, the members of the Chinese Eastern Battalion. Even Admiral Alexander V. Kolchak was warned not to exceed the 500 Chinese auxiliaries which he had recruited to assist his forces. Both counterrevolutionary leaders stated that the Bolsheviks fighting them were commanded by an Austrian general named Taube.¹⁰¹ This lent credence to the charges that the prisoners of war were being led by their own officers and that the Germans were furnishing officer cadres for the Red Guard units. Chinese interest in the counterrevolutionary recruiting was based upon their fear that the Japanese would use the prisoner problem to justify their invasion of not only Siberia, but also Manchuria.

John F. Stevens of the railway advisory commission told Secretary Lansing that his personnel were unable to work on the Baikal portion of the Trans-Siberian Railway until the Bolsheviks and armed prisoners were driven away.¹⁰² Stevens believed General Dmitri L. Horvat, the Russian Governor and General Manager of the Chinese Eastern Railway, when he informed him that General Semenov was being opposed by a German General

Taube who commanded a mixed force of Bolsheviks which included 3,000 German and Austrian prisoners. The prisoners were used principally to man the artillery pieces and machine guns. Additionally, there were 15,000 armed and organized prisoners at Chita, Irkutsk, and Omsk. More prisoners from east and west of Irkutsk were concentrating at that city. German propaganda and influence in Harbin was on the rise, according to Mr. Stevens.¹⁰³ Now two different sources had reported a General Taube of Austrian or German origin commanding the forces arrayed against Semenov along the Manchurian border.

The commercial attaché in Russia, William C. Huntington, viewed the strength of the Bolsheviks as limited, with the prisoners of war as their only source of power.¹⁰⁴ Consul DeWitt C. Poole in Moscow had information that the Bolsheviks were actively propagandizing the prisoners at Nowonskolaejsk to fight against General Semenov. Alfred R. Thomson at Omsk stated that all the war prisoners at Omsk, Semipalatinsk, and Tumen had been disarmed as of 20 May, but that the propagandists were becoming more successful in these areas.¹⁰⁵ To further complicate the issue, Poole's dispatches from his duty at Rostov in December and January finally reached the State Department. In addition to advocating support for the counterrevolutionaries as the only real option for the Allies, Poole recommended "consideration of the practicability of removing German and Austrian war prisoners from Siberia into Manchuria under Chinese Guard."¹⁰⁶ This provided another option for the Secretary to ponder, especially since it removed the problem from Russia.

Lieutenant Colonel James A. Ruggles, the military attaché at Vologda, furnished the military's first report on the Czech Legion on 10 May 1918. The Americans were slow in recognizing the potential of

this force. Having seen the movement of another French-enlisted prisoner force, 2,500 Serbians, through Moscow enroute to Murmansk for evacuation, Ruggles felt the need to elaborate upon the Czech recruiting successes. Voluntary enlistments from the 40,000 Czechoslovak prisoners increased daily despite Bolshevik efforts to recruit the Red Guards.¹⁰⁷

On the 10th and 20th of May V. I. Lenin had held his third and fourth meetings with the Central Party Committee to discuss the prisoner of war issue. The Soviets had been receiving increasing pressure in the form of demands from the Germans concerning Bolshevik propagandizing and recruiting in the prison camps and their allowance of the Czech Legion to pass unimpeded to Vladivostok for evacuation to the European western front. This pressure had led to Foreign Commissar George Chicherin's wire to the Siberian Soviet in April.

Fearing that Japan will advance into Siberia, Germany is categorically demanding that German war prisoners held in Eastern Siberia be removed at once to either Western Siberia or European Russia. Please take all necessary measures. The Czechoslovak detachments must not go farther east.¹⁰⁸

When the eastward movement of the Czech trains was stopped at the end of April, the Czechs first were annoyed to see trainloads of laughing Austrian and German prisoners of war headed west along the Trans-Siberian Railway. While it was normal for traffic on the single-line railway to be routed alternately east and west, the Germans had apparently secured concessions from the Soviets to allow the speedy return of the prisoners at the expense of the Czechs.¹⁰⁹ The Czechs continued to do their part to obstruct these repatriation attempts where possible. Troops left at Chulym had managed to send back two trainloads of prisoners. The Czechs had no intention of allowing their old enemies to rejoin the fighting ranks of Germany and Austria, and then to have to fight them all over again

when they reached France.¹¹⁰ The Czech National Council was forced to return to Moscow to persuade the Soviets to honor their earlier agreement for free passage to the east coast for the Legion. The conditions were now ripe for an armed confrontation with the Soviets who controlled the railway and Czech movement east.

At Chelyabinsk on 14 May a Czech troop train was halted on a siding alongside a prisoner of war train enroute west. As the prisoner train started to leave, a disgruntled Hungarian harboring a resentment for the Czech defectors accidentally killed a Czech Legionnaire. The Czechs forcibly stopped the train and hanged the culprit. When the local Soviet intervened by arresting the Czech officers the remainder of the unit seized control of the city and the railroad. This incident led to arrest of the Czech National Council members in Moscow and a Soviet order to disarm and stop the movement of all Czech units. Comrade Aralov, Leon Trotsky's assistant, issued the order:

By order of the Chairman of the Commissariat of War, Comrade Trotsky, you are to detain the Czechoslovaks and organize them into labor artels or draft them into the Soviet Red Army....¹¹¹

The Soviets quickly dispatched agitators to Irkutsk, Samara, and Penza with Trotsky's order. The Czechoslovak Section of the Commissariat of Nationalities convinced the Congress of Czechoslovak Communists to unanimously protest against the action at Chelyabinsk and called upon the soldiers to desert their leaders and join the Russian Revolution.¹¹² Trotsky's order caused a wave of indignation when it was intercepted by the Czech forces scattered the length of the Trans-Siberian.¹¹³

Intrigue in the ranks, frequent misunderstandings with the Soviets, the detention of the trains by the local Soviets, the unhampered movement of the German and Austrian prisoners westward, and the arrest of the

National Council in Moscow brought tensions to a boiling point. On 25 May at Marianovka, the 26th at Irku'sk, and the 27th at Zlatoust, detachments of the Red Guards under orders of the local Soviets attacked the various troop trains in an attempt to enforce Trotsky's orders.¹¹⁴ They were all unsuccessful. The Czechs rapidly counterattacked and seized control all along the railway. Unfortunately, the Czech Legion was dispersed from Rtliscev, west of Penza, to Vladivostok, a distance of about 7,000 kilometers (4,200 miles). The force was subdivided into the Penza, Chelyabinsk, Siberian, and Vladivostok groups for control. Controlling the length of the Trans-Siberian, the Czechs shut off the already-pinched Russian economy from vast supplies of meat, corn, and dairy produce which it normally drew from Siberia.¹¹⁵

William Brandenburg likened the incident at Chelyabinsk to the assassination at Sarajevo. It was incidental rather than being the causative factor in the pending clash. Japanese and British troops had already landed at Vladivostok in April, and General Semenov was reported to be crossing the River Onon into the Trans-Baikal. The long threatened intervention appeared to be taking form. The Czech movement to the east appeared to be linked to an Allied strategy to concentrate forces. The Bolsheviks found further proof in support of this thesis by the absence of shipping to allow the evacuation of Czech forces from Vladivostok. The Soviets regarded the halting of the Czech trains as preventive self-defense resulting from German pressures. The Czechs believed that they were enroute for the western front. Hence, their delay and resultant clashes with the Soviets caused them to view their actions as self-defense and protection against unprovoked attacks. The numerous Internationalists amongst the ranks of the Red Guards opposing the Czechs lent weight to

Czech charges that their delay was an enemy-inspired move to prevent their reaching the western front and to imprison them again in Russia.¹¹⁶

Consul John K. Caldwell at Vladivostok was the first to inform the State Department of the difficulties of the Czech Legion. Ernest L. Harris had told him that the Czechs at Irkutsk were fighting armed prisoners of war who were attempting to disarm them. He further added that there had been fighting all along the Trans-Siberian Railway between the Czechs and the Bolsheviks and the armed prisoners.¹¹⁷

The British Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, suggested that there were certain advantages to having the Czech Legion remain where it was along the railroad. He even considered offering the support of the Czech Legion along with some Allied aid to Leon Trotsky if they would resist the Germans.¹¹⁸ Looking to the Czechs, Lloyd George took the lead in pushing Siberian intervention to hinder German plans in Russia. The fact that the British were bearing the brunt of the newly-released German divisions, without material American contributions, justified not allowing the Americans and Japanese to block British attempts to contain these German maneuvers.¹¹⁸ The possibility of the Czechs lending their support to Soviet Russia was negated by Trotsky's comments on 31 May:

In case the continuation of their journey should be rendered impossible by failure of the English and French to provide necessary ships, they (the Czechoslovaks) would be given an opportunity to remain in Russia and choose an occupation most suited to their training and desires, i.e., to enter the Red Army or take up a trade. But this proposal dictated by the best of intentions...was used by counterrevolutionary elements...to poison the minds of the Czechoslovaks and make them believe that the Soviet Government was scheming to hand them over to the Germans.¹²⁰

The Soviet leader, V. I. Lenin, recognized his position vis-a-vis the Allied Powers and Germany. With the provision of more economic support to General Semenov, he saw the possibility of all the Allies agreeing

to present an ultimatum to Russia - "either fight against Germany, or there will be a Japanese invasion aided by us."¹²¹

As Lenin later worded it, "If you cannot protect your neutrality, we shall wage war on your territory."¹²² Lenin continually saw success in playing all factions against one another:

Salvation now lay not in an open rupture of the Brest Treaty but in the ability to maneuver in the complex international situations that arose from the conflicting interests of the various imperialist countries.¹²³

The Germans in Russia were faced with a dilemma concerning their prisoners of war. Count Mirbach, the head of the German Repatriation Commission, was visibly disturbed by the marching war prisoners demonstrating their support of the Russian revolution and openly calling for the overthrow of the Kaiser.¹²⁴ These demonstrations caused the ambassador to renew pressure on the Soviets to cease propagandizing the prisoners and to restore order in the camps to assist the repatriation teams. The invading German commander in the Ukraine, Major General Max Hoffmann, commented on the problems which accompanied the returning prisoners:

There were about one and a half million Austrian prisoners and about 100,000 of ours. These are all now streaming back. In addition there are about three to four million of the population of Poland, Lithuania, and Kurland now wandering home again; part of them were carried off by the Russians, and part fled before our advance. We must get rid of the Austrians as soon as possible, otherwise we shall have to feed them.¹²⁵

The waiting time for trains to move the prisoners was eight to ten days. These numbers added to the food problem because the advancing German units were reduced to foraging just to stay alive. The breadbasket which they had hoped to plunder was almost empty at a time when famine was affecting all of Europe.

American diplomatic communications from Russia persisted in reporting the prisoner of war threat, suggesting intervention and support

for the counterrevolutionary elements, the necessity of keeping the railways open, and weakness of the Soviets despite heavy recruiting amongst the prisoners. From France Ambassador William G. Sharp relayed his conversations with General Niessel, chief of the French Military Mission to Russia, and with General Berthelot, former commander of French forces in Rumania. Niessel advocated immediate action to prevent seizure of the railroads by German armed and organized prisoners of war.¹²⁶ General Berthelot saw the armed 150,000 prisoners as a force capable of taking over the country from the weak Red Guards.¹²⁷ The newest American interest was the plight of the Czech Legion and its control of the railway. In the long run, however, the most significant action was the recall of Colonel Raymond Robins from Russia.

Colonel Robins had served as the unofficial link with the Soviets since the Bolshivik revolution and had developed considerable rapport as an American sympathetic to the Russian position. The death of Consul General Maddin Summers in Moscow on 8 May triggered the subsequent recall. George F. Kennan provides the best analysis of the problem:

The image of Robins' high-powered operations, tinged as it was with the suspicion of an excessive intimacy with the Soviet leaders and of a personal ambition for the ambassadorship, contrasted unfavorably with that of the hard-working and self-effacing Consul General (Summers), who had been left-as many saw it-to bear in Moscow the burden of upholding the dignity of the world that both Bolsheviki and the Germans were determined to destroy, and whose health had proved too fragile for the burden.¹²⁸

Raymond Robins attached great importance to his intermediary role, as can be seen in this letter to Major Allen Wardwell of the Red Cross Mission:

Confidentially today I was shown a telegram from Balfour to our government asking that I be impowered to cooperate in support of their (British) policy-this policy being the one we have taught Lockhart and that we have fought for now six months. So wags the world away!

In that same letter Robins indicated his assessment of the relationship

which he had with Ambassador Francis:

Between the Ambassador and myself there is perfect good will and no little cooperation, but our relations are a sort of Peace from Necessity similar to the German affair at Brest. I am still being used by him for all relations between the two governments and in receipt daily of confidential communication. Still I know that if he held me over a cliff and could afford to let go he would do so with a sigh of genuine relief.¹²⁹

Ambassador Francis did just that the day after Maddin Summer's funeral in Moscow. The official reason was made known months later by Basil Miles, Chief of the Russian Desk in the State Department:

Mr. R(obins) was sent to Russia with a Red Cross Mission the object of which was to study the conditions existing in that country.... He then acted in such a way as to create the impression that he was an accredited agent of the U.S. and that his acts and statements were, so to speak, official. The State Department then notified the Red Cross to withdraw him from Russia, which was done.¹³⁰

By the time Raymond Robins reached the United States via Vladivostok, official Washington looked upon him with disfavor and disregarded his attempts to present his views on the Russian situation.¹³¹

The month of May had led to British assumption of the lead in pressing for Allied intervention in Siberia and support of Russia's counterrevolutionaries. The French wanted immediate American action to prevent the Germans from arming the prisoners to seize the railroads. The Chinese sought to control their involvement with the counterrevolutionary armies by restricting recruiting amongst their peoples in Manchuria. Their basic motive was to avoid any issue which might prompt further Japanese incursions in China. The Czechs had been stopped along the Trans-Siberian when they counterattacked the Red Guard elements to capture the entire railway from Penza to Vladivostok. This action also tended to tie them down in Siberia in four separate groups united only by their telegraph links.

Czech actions confirmed the Soviets' belief that the Czechs were

just another counterrevolutionary element attempting to strangle the nation during a time of famine. The Soviets became more vocal about the Japanese landing at Vladivostok and adopted a strategy of playing the imperialists of both sides off against one another in order to survive. The Germans were more and more frustrated in their attempts to stop Soviet propaganda amongst their prisoners, to maintain order in the camps necessary to facilitate repatriation, to acquire adequate foodstuffs in order to justify the continued invasion and occupation of southern Russia, and to prevent the Czech seizure of the only transportation means available for rapid movement of prisoners. The preparations for the summer offensive prevented the Germans from devoting more interest to this back-water area.

The second German offensive on the western front in June would further flame the prisoner of war threat, as the previous offensive had. The major difference would be the connection of the Czech problem to the perceived threat by war prisoners to the Allies.

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THE SUMMER OFFENSIVE AND INTERVENTION

The final upswing in message traffic relating to the prisoner of war issue took place between June and August, 1918, reaching its peak during July when the second German offensive on the western front ground to a halt and the United States decided to join the Allied intervention in Russia. June traffic consisted of twenty dispatches, of which two were from or within Washington; ten of the field messages and both of the Washington sources tied the Czech predicament to the prisoner of war issue. The substance of the messages indicates the active desire to build a case which would justify intervention. The majority of the traffic came from European Russia, marking a significant change from the past months when it originated from the Far East.

The picture painted by the American diplomats in the region and readily accepted by the officials in Washington tied the war prisoner issue to the plight of the stranded Czech Legion. These Czechs represented the Allied Powers in Russia and as such became the target of the armed prisoners of war. The war prisoner threat to the Czechs became the justification for American intervention in August, 1918. How the attitudes and policies were developed is directly related to the Czech activities in Siberia.

The Czechs added a new and ultimately decisive factor to the debate over whether America should intervene. The army of a small nation struggling for independence was under attack partially by agents and assumed puppets of Germany. This element of the Siberian situation touched directly on a "common cause," on whose behalf President Wilson

had told the special British emissary, Sir William Wiseman, that he might intervene.¹ Wiseman drew an analogy between Wilson's Mexican and Russian policies. In both cases his objectives were the same; the establishment of a representative government by the people themselves. Principle, not self-interest, had motivated Wilson in Mexico, but dominant American business interests had obscured and vitiated the purity of his motives. Wilson wanted to avoid any sort of exploitative commercial or political involvement in Siberia that would contaminate an official policy of selflessness.²

The British were vitally concerned about the progress of the German advance towards Baku and the Caspian Sea. Lord Cecil, in his letter of resignation to Prime Minister David Lloyd George, warned that "from thence (Baku) the way lies open to the border of Afghanistan, and if they succeed in getting the support of the Moslems of Turkestan our position in India may well be seriously threatened."³ Bruce Lockhart had been warning his government that time was of the essence for intervention in Russia. The Czechs were the "last chance," and Siberia was more important than any effort in Murmansk.⁴

France was forced to rely upon the United States and Great Britain for allocating the necessary shipping to move the Czechs from Russia. When Britain declined to assist the movement by providing ships, the French had little choice.⁵ On 20 June, the French Minister of War directed General Lavergne in Siberia to halt the Czech anabasis, consolidate their positions, and to resist disarmament.⁶ Keeping the Czechs in Siberia to await anticipated reinforcements provided two advantages: they would serve as a rallying point for Czarist elements thrashing about in Russia, and they would assist in starving central Russia by denying access to one

of the world's largest granaries.⁷

The idea that British policy was heavily tinged by anti-Bolshevism was an established fact. Pronouncements by Prime Minister Lloyd George were blatantly anti-Soviet. By late June Lloyd George began devoting to intervention an energy and attention that earlier Lord Cecil had accused him of lacking. In fact, Lloyd George wanted to deal personally with the Japanese ambassador in order to "get a move on."⁸

After the British, French, Italian, and American diplomatic representatives in Russia informed the Commissar for Foreign Affairs that their governments would regard further attempts to disarm the Czechs an unfriendly act, relations between the Soviets and the Czech National Council rapidly went from bad to worse.⁹ On 5 June, the Czechoslovak Executive Committee had explained the actions of the Legion to the French Mission. The first reason for the Czech counterattack was "the threats of the Soviet Government to break up our units, intern them as war prisoners, and shoot all armed Czechoslovaks." Secondly, the "spark that set us into action...was the treacherous attack upon our echelon at Marianovka, near Omsk, on May 25." Third, "our tactics were directed at first toward insuring a safe and unimpeded passage to France for ourselves."¹⁰

When the Czechs captured Samara on 7 June, they executed fifty Austrian prisoners and two Czechs who had fought against them.¹¹ At Knabarovsk, the Czechs murdered fifteen Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war who had formed a musical group to support themselves.¹² At Petropovlovsk, Colonel Zak's Czechs had fought a 2,000 man force of Bolsheviks, whose numbers included many Letts, Estonians, and some German and Magyar prisoners of war.¹³ In the territories occupied by the Czech forces, Russian

democratic governments were organized under Czech leadership. They saw rehabilitation and control of the local economy as a military necessity. Order was restored on the railways, in the storehouses, and in the armories. These efforts enabled the mobilization of the Czech citizenry and led to the formation of Yugoslav, Rumanian, Italian, and Latvian detachments.¹⁴ The former Provisional Government's diplomats in Tokyo saw the Czech operations in Siberia in a different light. The success of Czech forces against the Red Guards had turned their heads, causing them to behave like conquerors in an enemy country.¹⁵

Thomas G. Masaryk explained the predicament of his forces fighting in Russia:

Our men believed them (the Soviets) to be under German and particularly Austrian and Magyar control, and thought that to fight them was really to fight against Germany and Austria. All reports spoke of the part which German and Magyar prisoners took in the Bolshevik attacks upon us.¹⁶

The Vladivostok group of Czechs did not assist the western groups until 29 June. On that day, Czech forces in Vladivostok seized and occupied the city. Here, the "Bolsheviks and their soldiers--Hungarians and Austrians" refused to yield the fort before inflicting considerable losses.¹⁷ In the far west Colonel Cecek cleared the spur railroad lines and disarmed Hungarian and Austrian prisoners of war who had been armed by the Red Guards near Ufa and Orenburg.¹⁸

Thomas Masaryk understood the psychological impact of his forces in Russia:

Even sober-minded political and military men ascribed great military importance to our command of the railway. Our control of the railway and our occupation of Vladivostok had the glamour of a fairy tale, which stood out the more brightly against the dark background of German successes in France. Ludendorff induced the German Government to protest to the Bolsheviks, alleging that the march of our men had prevented the German prisoners returning home to strengthen the German army.¹⁹

General Erich Ludendorff in his memoirs stated that the German High Command was not haunted by the apparition of a reconstructed eastern front in Russia. "The situation in Siberia, behind the Czecho-Slovaks, was so confused that the Entente could find no support there. For that reason it was without importance for us also."²⁰

The Soviets were able to do very little against the Czech forces except to launch vigorous propaganda campaigns against them and to denounce them as counterrevolutionaries. The civil war within Russia had grown more intense. Counterrevolutionary forces from monarchists to Mensheviks were organizing to overthrow the Soviet state. With each passing day during the summer of 1918, the Soviets appeared to weaken as their enemies grew bolder in their attacks.²¹

Consul Ernest L. Harris at Irkutsk described an attack on a Czech troop train by war prisoners at Innokentevskaya, near Irkutsk. The station was directly opposite an internment camp. When the fighting was over the Czechs had captured 22 Austrians, 4 Germans, and 9 Russian Red Guards. One German and four Austrians had been killed. To Harris this established "beyond doubt the question that a large number of the prisoners in Irkutsk are armed." His best sources reported 600 armed prisoners in Irkutsk, composing a large part of the Red Guard.²²

In China, Minister Paul Reinsch proposed that the Czechs be reinforced in Siberia once they were consolidated. They possessed the potential to control the region against the German war prisoners, were sympathetic to the liberal democratic Russian cause in Siberia, and were eager to assist the Allies. Removal of the Czechs would assist the Germans and discourage the liberal governments in Siberia.²³ Charles K. Moser in Harbin, Manchuria, explained that General Semenov had been defeated

primarily because of the strength of the prisoner of war units fighting him. The two to three thousand prisoners with the Red Guards east of Chita had the Chinese border officials concerned that they would pursue Semenov across the border. Moser recognized the futility of the counter-revolutionaries' attempts to restore order without armed Allied support.²⁴

Late in May, American Ambassador David R. Francis revealed his general lack of knowledge of the French connection with the Czech forces in Russia. Francis did recognize the possibility of the Czechs being used to resist the German war prisoners, who were sure to be armed against Allied intervention. The ambassador had been contacted by a representative of the united Polish elements, who had 60,000 Polish prisoners ready to fight Germany if provided arms. Francis' response was that he would maintain contact with these forces.²⁵ The Czechs were being heavily propagandized by the Bolsheviks, who were trying a variety of tactics to hinder their departure. The Bolsheviks saw the Czechs as counterrevolutionaries and were willing to order their disarmament as demanded by the Germans. Francis reached these conclusions with the assistance of Consul DeWitt Poole in Moscow.²⁶

Ambassador Francis revealed his sentiments in a letter to his son on 4 June:

...I am now planning to prevent if possible the disarming of 40,000 or more Czecho-Slovak soldiers, whom the Soviet Government has ordered to give up their arms under penalty of death, and has prohibited their transportation by every railroad line....I have no instructions or authority from Washington to encourage these men to disobey the orders of the Soviet Government, except as expressions of sympathy with the Czecho-Slovaks sent out by the Department of State. I have taken chances before, however....²⁷

Francis' feelings are quite evident in his dispatches to the State Department. He reported that British intelligence in Moscow had discovered

three trainloads of German prisoners being sent from Smolensk district to fight the Czechs at Penza. The French knew of Soviet orders to gather 12,000 uniforms and rifles at Petrograd, presumably to arm the war prisoners.²⁸ On 19 June, the American ambassador received notification that the French had decided that the Czechs should remain in Russia, with the concurrence of the National Council. Czech domination of the railroad was rapidly moving westward.

The pressures of the famine in Russia increased with the Czech blockage of Siberian foodstuffs to western Russia. The plague of famine struck Russia at this time for several reasons: grain reserves had been exhausted after three years of war; the agrarian labor force had suffered tremendous losses during the war, which reduced the size of the potential harvest; the weeks just prior to the harvest season had traditionally been hungry in Russia; and German control of the Ukraine to exact large amounts of grain in order to offset the British blockade drastically reduced outside sources of grain. The weak Soviets were forced to arm the prisoners against the Czechs to regain control of the railroads necessary to move food to relieve the famine conditions in west Russia.²⁹

Conspiracies were rampant in Russia. Ambassador Francis reported the meeting of a counterrevolutionary group and a German colonel who proposed the overthrow of the Soviets with 10,000 German troops and another division consisting of organized war prisoners. The anti-Bolshevik faction would then be obliged to ally with Germany to force the Allies to leave Russia. Francis said the Russians were considering the offer and appeared inclined to accept.³⁰

To support intervention, Francis described the prisoner of war exchange program as it was actually operating. The Germans were receiving

able-bodied prisoners in return for Russian invalids. These healthy returnees were being used by the Germans to thicken the ranks on the western front. Ambassador Francis saw the Allies' failure to intervene as prolonging the war by as much as two years at the expense of "priceless blood and untold treasure." The Germans would replenish their manpower in Russia and possibly organize an army.³¹

Consul Poole at Moscow supported the ambassador's comments on the prisoner exchanges between the Germans and Russians.

...Returning Russian prisoners without exception invalids, most of them consumptive, many die enroute. All Russian officers and all soldiers capable of bearing arms retained in Germany. German trains on the other hand filled with healthy prisoners, 70 percent according to estimate of one train doctor would be fit for service within month.³²

Poole also reported the capture of Omsk by the Czechs and the large number of German and Austrian war prisoners amongst those captured. French reports stated that when the Czechs entered the city they occupied only the station and railroad yards and issued proclamations that they would not interfere in internal affairs except to preserve order. In every case, the Czech arrival had led to the immediate overthrow of the Soviets.³³ Consul Poole added to the ambassador's previous statement about the Russians seeking aid from the Germans against the Czech forces on the Trans-Siberian Railway. The Foreign Commissar, George Chicherin, had hinted at this possibility during a recent discussion. The Soviets were most concerned about the famine and had even queried the Ukrainians for help. The fact that there were increasing numbers of prisoners in the ranks of the Red Guards led Poole to associate these efforts with German influence.³⁴

Finally, Poole reported that Commissar Chicherin had threatened

to send Red Guards to north Russia to resist further Allied invasions in that region. The importance of this was the intimation that the German war prisoners in that area could be mobilized by the German elements in Finland. To Poole "the moment was peculiarly ripe for intervention." Intervention in Siberia was essential to deal with "direct and indirect German military pressure" in north Russia. He foresaw the failure of a purely military enterprise in Siberia unless it possessed political and economic administrative genius.³⁵

By the end of the month, the Czech National Council at Vladivostok had asked the Allied powers for further assurance that they would remain to support the Czech cause in Siberia. On 26 June 1918, Admiral Austin M. Knight, Commander in Chief of the Asiatic Fleet, wired Secretary of the Navy, Josephus Daniels, for guidance. The Czechs wanted to know whether they could expect any assistance from the Allies and in whose interests, other than their own, they were "acting against the many thousands of armed Austro-Hungarian prisoners in Siberia."³⁶

Major Walter S. Drysdale, the military attaché from Peking on special duty in Siberia to investigate the prisoner of war situation, sent out a very alarming message on 26 June. He reported that there were 10,000 armed war prisoners in eastern and central Siberia and that internationalism had ceased to be a prerequisite for recruiting. The strength of these prisoner units made them independent of the Soviets, which made agreements between the Red Guards and the Czechs impossible. Drysdale saw the Czechs as a "splendidly adequate nucleus for a new Siberian army," which with Allied support might number 200,000 by the spring. Then, these combined forces could operate against the Germans in European Russia.³⁷ Admiral Knight concurred with Drysdale's report, stating that

"Drysdale who has heretofore minimized danger from war prisoners admits they have now gone beyond control of Soviets." Admiral Knight continued that the Czechs believed that 20,000 armed Austrian and German prisoners were opposing the reunification of their Nizhneudinsk echelon. The railroad to the east was also controlled by Red Guards, the majority of whom were armed prisoners. The Czechs felt that there were several thousand at Chita, Khabarovsk, and Nikolsk that were out of hand.³⁸ It must be remembered however, that the Czechs considered all war prisoners "out of hand" unless restricted to their camps or returning to them despite repatriation attempts by the Germans.

Breckenridge Long, the Third Assistant Secretary of State, briefed Secretary Robert Lansing on a meeting he had just had with the White Russian Ambassador, Boris A. Bakhmeteff. Bakhmeteff reported Bolshevik strength in Irkutsk at 8,000, of whom 1,000 were German prisoners. He argued for Allied intervention and the utilization of the Czech force at Vladivostok. Contrary to Thomas Masaryk's declarations, he saw the Czechs as becoming most antagonistic towards the Bolsheviks and felt that they would restore order under Allied guidance as part of the military expedition.³⁹ The representative of the former Provisional Government saw the Czechs as a potential force in the overthrow of the Bolsheviks in Russia, beginning in Siberia.

The State Department was provided by the British Embassy a copy of their Russian agent's views on the need for immediate intervention. R. H. Bruce Lockhart was paraphrased by the British Embassy as stating, "We must act at once in order to make it impossible for the enemy to arm the prisoners of war and to prepare an organized resistance to the allied force operating in Siberia."⁴⁰ This report was carefully selected by the

British because it linked the prisoners of war with a threat to Siberia, since Lockhart had inferred just the opposite when Colonel Raymond Robins was in Russia.

Colonel Edward House, the President's close confidant, was convinced by June that it was no longer possible to simply negate the Allied demands for intervention.⁴¹ William Hard's biography of Colonel Raymond Robins contains a quotation, allegedly Wilson's, on intervention:

It (the American Government) is bound in frankness to say the wisdom of intervention seems to it most questionable. If it were undertaken, emphasizing the assumption that the most explicit assurances would be given that it was undertaken by Japan as an ally of Russia in Russia's interest...the Central Powers could and would make it appear that Japan was doing in the East precisely what Germany is doing in the West and so seek to counter the condemnation which all the world must pronounce against Germany's invasion of Russia, which she attempts to justify on the pretext of restoring order; and it is the judgment of the United States...that a hot resentment would be generated in Russia, and particularly among friends of the Russian revolution, for which the Government of the United States entertains the greatest sympathy in spite of the unhappiness and misery which had for the time being sprung out of it.⁴²

The source cannot be verified, but the quote is representative of the general feelings of the President at the time. The problem was that the State Department, namely Robert Lansing, saw the issue and its apparent solution quite differently.

On 23 June 1918, Secretary Lansing recommended to President Woodrow Wilson that the United States support intervention to relieve the Czechs:

...Now it appears that their (Czech) efforts to reach Vladivostok being opposed by the Bolsheviks they are fighting the Red Guards along the Siberian line with more or less success. As these troops are most loyal to our cause and have been most unjustly treated by the various Soviets ought we not to consider whether something cannot be done to support them?...Is it not possible that in this body of capable and loyal troops may be found a nucleus for military occupation of the Siberian railway?⁴³

Control of the railway was essential to allow the American Railway corps

to restore operations along the Trans-Siberian as the United States had promised the Provisional Government in late 1917.

The British inserted the final lever under Wilson when Lord Reading, the British High Commissioner and Ambassador on Special Mission to the United States, informed the President of the British intention to lay their intervention plans before the Supreme War Council on 2 July.⁴⁴

Thus, by the end of June the Allies' search for a solution to the Russian dilemma began to coalesce around the plight of the Czechs. The British had become anti-Bolshevik in their attitude, advocating immediate intervention and demanding that the Czechs remain in Siberia to prevent any threat to India or north Russia. The French had been forced to retain the Czechs in Siberia when the British saw a better use of this force and refused to allocate necessary shipping to evacuate them from Vladivostok. All along the Trans-Siberian Railway, the Czech units had capitalized on the weaknesses of the local Soviets and Red Guards and continued to harass the repatriation efforts by the Central Powers. Publicity of their plight had served as the necessary catalyst to force American interest in intervention and to provide a moral justification for another humanitarian action. Control of the railroad helped the Americans to get the railway volunteers in action, as had been requested by the Provisional Government many months before.

The American diplomats in the field had continued to present the prisoner of war threat with great vigor and had capitalized upon the link it had with the Czech Legion. Colonel House had been influenced by the various pressures for intervention and needed only an acceptable justification. Secretary Lansing provided the necessary rationale when he proposed that the United States assist the Czech Legion, which was being

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threatened by armed prisoners of war in its attempt to assist the Allies on the western front. President Wilson had been forced to consider the impact of American intervention with the Japanese in Siberia. The President, however, decided to postpone his decision until the British did, in fact, submit the proposal before the Supreme War Council. Wilson procrastinated in order to develop the humanitarian rationale to explain publicly American participation in the Russian intervention.

JULY, 1918

American policy toward Russia was most critically affected during the month of July. Of the twenty-one messages from the field which dealt with the prisoner of war issue, over half were related to the Czech situation. The primary source of prisoner traffic shifted once again to the Far Eastern posts. All eight messages in Washington tied the prisoner of war issue to the plight of the Czech Legion. During July, the United States was forced to deal with the issue of intervention and to agree to participate in Allied expeditions to Siberia and north Russia.

While Moscow was in turmoil over the assassination of the German Ambassador, Count Mirbach, on 2 July, the Supreme War Council in Paris was considering plans for intervention in Russia. The French and British, led by Prime Minister Lloyd George, forced the issue as they had threatened in late June by submitting their plan before the Supreme War Council. Since the Brest Peace, informal and formal pressures upon President Wilson and his advisors by Sir William Wiseman, Lord Reading, and Jean A. Jusserand, the French Ambassador, had been unsuccessful. The concept of creating a second front had not appealed to the American President. The Bolsheviks were not about to invite an Allied intervention which might

have had the effect of overthrowing their unstable regime. Unilateral intervention by the Japanese in the Far East was not acceptable to President Wilson, even with the invitation of the Russians. Only the moral issue of assistance to the beleaguered Czech Legion seemed to affect President Wilson's support for an Allied operation. The prisoner of war threat had been transferred to the Czechs and posed as a critical problem by the Allies. The Allies succeeded in overcoming American vacillation. The presentation of the intervention plan at Paris required American collaboration and support for the proposed Russian expeditions. The Japanese wisely declined to support the French and British decision to place their intervention proposals before the Supreme War Council.

In the secret seventh session of the Supreme War Council on 2 July, the Anglo-French proposals were sanctioned, and the Council agreed to support the plans. The United States was asked to participate in the Allied expedition, which would consist of 100,000 troops in the Siberian region. Since the Japanese would contribute the majority of the forces, they were given the prerogative of selecting the commander. The basic objectives were: to enable the Russians to cast off their German oppressors; to weaken Germany by denying Russian supplies and by actively engaging its troops on a reconstituted front; and to assist the Czechoslovak forces. The Japanese were prepared to support the action sanctioned by the Supreme War Council but would not actively support the plan to intervene until the United States agreed.⁴⁵ Arthur H. Frazier, the Diplomatic Liaison Officer to the Supreme War Council, played up the moral issue and the need for rapid action in a message to Secretary Robert Lansing:

...This Czechoslovak force...is in grave danger of being cut off by the organization of German and Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war

at Irkutsk, and an appeal for immediate military assistance has been made by the Czech National Council to the Allied consuls at Vladivostok. The Allies are under the responsibility of taking immediate action, if these gallant allies are not to be overwhelmed. To fail in bringing support to these faithful troops, now desperately fighting for the Allied cause, would not only forever discredit the Allies, but might have a disastrous effect on the Slav population both of Russia itself and of Austro-Hungary and the Balkans as proving that the Allies are unable or unwilling to exert themselves effectively to save the Slav world from falling wholly under German domination. On the other hand to push a force through to Irkutsk to overwhelm the German prisoner organization and join hands with the Czechoslovaks would probably be a simple and rapid matter if it were taken in hand immediately. Intervention in Siberia, therefore, is an urgent necessity both to save the Czechoslovaks and to take advantage of an opportunity of gaining control of Siberia for the Allies which may never return.⁴⁶

British and French influence upon Frazier is most evident in the last sentence, which points out the advantage of controlling Siberia for the Allies.

On Independence Day, Secretary of State Lansing drafted a memorandum for the President. In it he emphasized American responsibility to assist the Czechs because they were being attacked by the German and Austrian war prisoners, the need to control the railways which would facilitate the Czech evacuation, and finally, the need to assure the world that the United States would withdraw from Russia once the danger of German-Austrian aggression was ended.⁴⁷ President Wilson, against his inclination and judgment, was forced to consider how a plan of intervention could be carried out. He insisted that since Russia had not invited intervention, the move must not appear to injure her sovereign rights. Wilson was fearful that once Japanese forces found themselves in Siberia, they could not be persuaded to leave. Their military were not likely to see much value in the intervention unless it resulted in Japanese control of eastern Siberia. To this Wilson was opposed.⁴⁸

With the State Department in support of intervention, the President

held a conference on the Russian situation at the White House on 6 July. The principal strategic advisors of the President attended: Secretary of State Lansing, Secretary of War Newton Baker, Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels, and the two military chiefs, General Peyton C. March and Admiral William Benson. Reestablishment of the eastern front was rejected because of its infeasibility. This decision eliminated any intervention operations beyond Irkutsk. The proposed plan of operations contained the following direct reference to the Czechs and the prisoner of war threat (see Appendix 2 for entire message text):

The public announcement by this and Japanese Governments that the purpose of landing troops is to aid Czecho-Slovaks against German and Austrian prisoners, that there is no purpose to interfere with internal affairs of Russia, and that they guarantee not to impair the political or territorial sovereignty of Russia....⁴⁹

Thus, the United States had committed herself publicly to intervene in Russia to save the Czechs from the Austro-Hungarian and German war prisoners. The proviso was that the Japanese agreed to accede to the decisions made at the White House Conference. This condition allowed the United States to sidestep the issue of confronting Japan over her intentions in the Far East.

Since the decision to intervene had been inspired by the field reports, the State Department through its field representatives sought to reinforce the justifications for intervention. The official notification of American policy changes was not provided to the field, however, until after the Aide-Memoire was issued on 17 July. Hence, the field diplomats thought that they were still building the case for intervention until they received the Aide-Memoire.

During the White House Conference, the State Department received Consul F. Willoughby Smith's dispatch from Tiflis in Caucasia. Smith reported

the Turkish occupation of Baku and the surrounding area. In the absence of German assistance, the Turks were attempting to arm the limited number of prisoners for duty in Turkestan. The former Russian storehouses in the region were being used to supply the Turks.⁵⁰ Consul Smith confirmed the fears of the British in south Russia with this dispatch. Two reports were received during the same time period from Irkutsk. The first, from Consul Ernest L. Harris, was dated 15 June and described the city as being in the hands of 3,000 armed German and Austrian prisoners.⁵¹ This old message added further fuel to the fire, regardless of its currency. The second message, dated 5 July, beat an older drum:

...There are at present 70,000 armed Czechs between Penza and Vladivostok, an army which may be utilized as a nucleus, and many anti-Bolsheviks are now rallying to the Czechs in order to overthrow the Bolsheviks. If we can induce Russia to again declare war upon Germany the moral effect upon the German people would be as discouraging as if a great battle were lost in France...If Allies do not intervene and Czechs left unsupported there is grave danger of Germany's seizing Siberian Railway line through armed prisoners of war. If Czechs are not supported there is danger that they may be overthrown by Bolsheviks and prisoners of war.⁵²

This message is virtually a verbatim transcript of Frazier's plea from Paris to support the Supreme War Council's decision. The exact impact of these field reports on the final decision to intervene is unknown; however, the messages were available for the White House Conference attendees.

In the meantime, further traffic reached Washington from Irkutsk. In a long, rambling message Consul Harris reported the findings of Major Walter Drysdale in his dealings with the Czech forces. Czech Captain Kadlets at Marinsk told Drysdale on 6 June that German and Austrian war prisoners gladly acted as Czech auxiliaries, primarily to avoid starvation. The White Russian commander at Taiga stated that the Red Guards were like rabbits without war prisoners to help them. At Tomsk and Novo Nikolaesk, there were 10,000 prisoners, of whom Germans constituted

a third. The Germans had reportedly formed a Karl Marx Battalion at Novo Nikolaesk as a last defense against starvation. Another 5,000 prisoners were reported as having been reinterned at Omsk and Novo Nikolaesk, while at Kargat the Soviet had announced that all prisoners would be armed to fight the Czechs. The German consul at Omsk requested 3,000 rifles to arm the 15,000 prisoners in that area against the Czechs. There were trains carrying repatriated prisoners to the west while others carried armed German and Magyar prisoners east to fight General Semenov.⁵³ This extremely confusing composite account did little except to verify that the Czechs were employing war prisoners, a fact carefully ignored by the officials in Washington. An old message from Consul Harris, which arrived on 9 July described the Soviets' last resort measures to disarm the Czechs: to blow up the railroad tunnels, to recall the forces being used against General Semenov to concentrate forces against the Czechs, and finally to arm every available prisoner in Siberia. During a recent Red Guard funeral at Irkutsk, 2,000 armed prisoners had paraded.⁵⁴

John K. Caldwell at Vladivostok reported on 9 July that the Czechs had captured Nikolsk from the Red Guard and their armed German and Austrian war prisoners. The Czechs were interrogating 800 Hungarian war prisoners at Nikolsk to determine who had borne arms against them. These Czechs were most concerned about the Allied attitude towards them because they believed that without Allied assistance only serious or fatal consequences awaited them.⁵⁵

On 18 July, Consul Caldwell provided the Department of State with the local information available. In the city there were 2,000 Czechs with another 12,000 spread along the railway for 150 miles towards Khabarovsk.

From the Volga River to Irkutsk there were about 40,000 Czechs, plus an undetermined number of prisoners estimated at between 5,000 and 20,000. Harris included armed prisoners in all estimates of the Red Guard forces because he could not give separate figures for them. Consul David B. Macgowan stated that there were 10,000 Red Guards, 13,000 German prisoners, and 150,000 Austrian prisoners in the Priamur district of Siberia. Before the arrival of the Czechs, only five percent of the prisoners were armed, excluding the Omsk prisoner population. Macgowan concluded that between one-fourth and one-half the prisoners were armed against the Czechs. Furthermore, using this rationale Macgowan calculated that there were at least 50,000 war prisoners armed in Siberia, of whom 15,000 to 27,000 were east of Irkutsk. The Czechs figured that they were facing 4,000 war prisoners and 10,000 Germans and Hungarians from Khabarovsk.⁵⁶

Consul Douglas Jenkins at Khabarovsk wrote that the Bolsheviks were propagandizing the prisoners and trying to persuade the Swedish Red Cross workers to convince the interned soldiers to join the Red Guards. The prisoners at that camp were more afraid of the Czechs and refused to be armed. The few armed prisoners in the city were Hungarians.⁵⁷ The Czech National Council at Vladivostok cabled Dr. Thomas G. Masaryk in the United States to explain their actions and motives. They explained their policy of noninterference in Russian domestic affairs except when absolutely essential for the protection of the Legion, a policy which the population had early recognized. The Council believed that the local Soviets in Siberia were able to maintain control only through support rendered by the internationalist units of German and Magyar war prisoners.⁵⁸

Charles K. Moser at Harbin asked for Red Cross assistance to

handle the refugee problem created by General Semenov's retreat into Manchuria. Thirty thousand Buriats reportedly had been driven from Siberia by the pursuing war prisoners.⁵⁹ At the same time, Consul Caldwell at Vladivostok also asked for Red Cross workers to support the Czech forces:

...I consider situation requires immediate action and that we should assist Czechs in their fight against armed war prisoners by furnishing arms, munitions, Red Cross hospitals with doctors and supplies and also some armed force. This action would not be for or against any Russian party but on same ground as Czechs; namely against Germany and Austria. It should be possible to establish front against Germany and at same time produce conditions under which election for temporary government could be held and so an improvement effected economically....⁶⁰

The Vladivostok station passed on Consul Harris' report from Irkutsk that the city had been captured by the Czechs on 11 July. Armed German and Austrian war prisoners, many of whom still wore their national uniforms, had constituted the bulwark of the defense against the Czechs. Austrian and German war prisoners caught by the Czechs with arms in their possession were immediately executed. Consul Harris supported keeping the Czechs in Siberia rather than returning them to Europe. He envisioned the Czechs forming "the backbone of Allied intervention and...reestablishing a front against Germany in Russia."⁶¹

In answering a query for information from Acting Secretary Frank Polk, Harris forwarded a report by the French military attaché. Major Pichon disagreed with the low American prisoner estimate of 150,000 and thought that it should be enlarged to 300,000, based upon his travels and discussions with the Rumanian recruiting officers. Pichon added:

...I have never pretended to believe in the creation of an army of prisoners but think it foolish to deny, for there are many that take refuge in such a theory, that these armed groups are not acting as Austro-Germans but as Bolsheviks not in an international movement for or against Germany but rather as international enemies of imperialism. Facts are facts--there are prisoner divisions...Latest

Bolshevik newspapers announce four divisions have been formed and trained in Siberia. If this is true I deem it (the organization of four new Soviet divisions) impossible without the aid of war prisoners and Austro-Hungarian officers.⁶²

DeWitt Poole at Moscow supported the French estimate by stating that three-fourths of the Red Army was made up of former Austrian and a few German war prisoners.⁶³ With these varied estimates and sources of information which seemingly verified the presence of vast numbers of war prisoners, one can understand both Washington's distorted view of the situation and the official attitude that the war prisoners were a significant force and posed a grave threat to the Czech Legion.

At Washington, Secretary Lansing's acceptance of all the field traffic as essentially correct was graphically displayed in a message to Ambassador Francis on 6 July. Lansing told Francis that Austrian and German war prisoners were involved in the Red Guard attack upon the Czechs at Irkutsk. He cited American Asiatic Fleet Commander Admiral Knight as the source establishing the number of armed prisoners in Siberia at 30,000.⁶⁴ Secretary Lansing saw the Czech victories at Vladivostok and other major cities as opening the way for the restoration of democratic regimes unthreatened by the Red Guards and war prisoners. Lansing wanted John F. Stevens to move along with his railway units to Vladivostok immediately.⁶⁵

Lord Reading had told Secretary Lansing that the British were willing to support Czech reunification operations westward along the Trans-Siberian Railway. The British perceived the Czechs as being threatened by 40,000 Red Guards and 12,000 armed prisoners.⁶⁶

Frank Polk sought data on the Czechs, the Red Guards, and the armed and unarmed prisoners concerning locations, movements, numbers, weaponry, and resupply techniques. He wanted information from all areas,

to internment camps as prisoners under strict control. In consequence of these orders, simultaneous attacks were made by Germans and Magyars on our troops along the line between Penza and Irkutsk... Being ambushed by the Magyars and Germans, our forces were compelled to accept combat in self-defense, the result being that we now have in our hands the whole Siberian Railway from Irkutsk to Penza... The Bolshevist Central Government of Siberia is hurriedly organizing German and Austrian prisoners against us.... Where they still retain power, this is only with the help of enemy prisoners who hold control of everything by force.⁷⁴

Czech control of Vladivostok was evident in the proclamation by the Allied and Associated Powers of an Allied protectorate over the city. Admiral Austin Knight signed as the senior American representative, while Captain Badura of the Czecho-Slovak Army signed as the town mayor. The official reason given for establishing the protectorate was the danger posed by the overt and covert activities of the Austro-German war prisoners.⁷⁵

The anti-Bolshevik governments which grew throughout Siberia as a result of the successful Czech seizure of the railway and the bordering areas were quick to take advantage of whatever Allied assurances were available. When Minister President P. Derber declared the establishment of the Provisional Government of Autonomous Siberia on 8 July, he included a program of steps which the new government planned to take to combat the German and Austrian war prisoners.⁷⁶ Lieutenant General Dmitri L. Horvat as the Provisional Ruler announced that "German troops, notwithstanding the peace which was signed by the commissars, continue their advance into Russian territory..., and Magyar and German prisoners of war..., in cooperation with the Bolsheviks, shed Russian blood all over the country, thus preparing for its seizure by Germany."⁷⁷ P. Derber, in a message to Secretary of State Lansing, expressed his concern for the large numbers of prisoners in Siberia and Russia and asked about the reestablishment of a new Russo-German front.⁷⁸

During the period which followed the White House Conference and

but particularly the Volga River and the Orenburg district.⁶⁷ This request was also sent to Consul Caldwell at Vladivostok.⁶⁸ Through Charge John Van A. MacMurray in Peking, Polk sought Chinese acquiescence for possible use of the Chinese Eastern Railway by the Czech forces.⁶⁹

The official American policy towards Russia was made public in the Aide-Memoire of 17 July 1918. This document announced the intervention of American troops into north Russia and Siberia to assist the Czechs against the armed German and Austrian war prisoners (see Appendix 3 for the complete document).⁷⁰ The American government clearly stated that its forces would be used only to guard Allied supplies and for the protection of the Czech troops who were reported to be under attack by German and Austrian prisoners of war. The entrance of soldiers for any other purpose would "be merely a method of making use of Russia, not a method of serving her."⁷¹

After the early presentation at the Supreme War Council of the Anglo-French proposal for intervention, British policy dealt strictly with Czech support. On 26 July, the French accompanied the American, British, and Italian diplomatic representatives in joint protest to Foreign Commissar Chicherin about the continued detention of the French, Polish, and Czech soldiers. They argued that these soldiers were being transported to France.⁷² A Serbian battalion which had left Odessa in 1917 and was working its way towards north Russia fell into this group. Eventually this unit would be attached to the north Russian expedition.⁷³

While the Allied diplomats were protesting in Moscow, the Czech commanders at Vladivostok presented their version of the Siberian situation to Dr. Masaryk in a cable to Washington:

Trotsky, in obedience to the German ultimatum, gave orders that our officers should be outlawed, our troops disarmed and our men sent

the issuance of the Aide-Memoire on 17 July 1918, Washington attempted to gain Japanese support for America's position on limiting the scope of the intervention in Russia. Counselor Frank Polk dealt with Ambassador Kikujiro Ishii in Washington, while Ambassador Roland K. Morris approached the Japanese government in Tokyo. On 16 July, Japanese Foreign Minister Goto expressed concern that the Americans were not overly impressed with the increasing threat from the armed German and Austrian prisoners and with repeated requests for Allied assistance by the moderate Russian factions in Siberia. War Minister Ōshima pointed out the flaws in the American proposal to limit the force to 7,000 men. Based upon the Japanese army's best estimates, the number of prisoners facing them would number 110,000, of whom more than 11,000 were already armed. The possibility existed of more being armed and reinforced by German elements. The Japanese felt that these factors alone justified their plan to send seven divisions to Siberia.⁷⁹

The Japanese Ambassador Ishii felt that for political reasons his government could not limit its commitment to 7,000 soldiers because such limitation would be regarded by Japanese opposition forces as an Allied vote of no confidence in the motives of Japan.⁸⁰ Counselor Frank Polk realized in his negotiations with Ambassador Ishii that the Japanese wanted to keep the size of the force open-ended because of anticipated resistance by the Bolsheviks and German and Austrian prisoners.⁸¹ American hopes that the Japanese would support the limitations proposed by President Wilson dimmed as the days passed and the Japanese government delayed issuing its "Aide-Memoire" on the intervention.

President Wilson's insistence on limiting the size of the intervention force was condemned by participants in the north Russian phase:

The bitter irony of this limitation is apparent in the fact that while it allowed the Supreme War Council to carry out its scheme of an Allied Expedition with the publicly announced purposes outlined, committing America and the other Allies to guarding of supplies at Murmansk and Archangel and frustrating the plans of Germany in North Russia, it did not permit the Allied War Council sufficient forces to carry out its ultimate and of course secret purpose of reorganizing the Eastern Front, which naturally was not to be advertised in advance either to Russia or to anyone. The vital aim was thus thwarted and the expedition destined to weakness and to future political and diplomatic troubles both in North Russia and in Europe and America.⁸²

This quotation shows the bitterness felt by the American soldiers in north Russia. Charles Seymour, author of Colonel House's papers provided a better explanation:

It is easy to criticize the slowness, the hesitations, and the changes of mind that characterized the decisions taken regarding Allied policy in Siberia. It is more difficult to define a constructive policy which, under the conditions, might have proved of practical value.⁸³

The intentions of the Executive Branch differed with those of the State Department concerning even the interpretation of the Aide-Memoire. Earliest evidence of this was Admiral Knight's involvement in the Allied protectorate over Vladivostok late in July. The Americans granted the same protection to the Murmansk Soviet.⁸⁴

The assassination of Count Mirbach and the resulting German threat to move troops into Moscow to "secure" German property and personnel led to uprisings in Moscow and Yaroslavl against Lenin's government. Lenin responded swiftly and decisively by unleashing another reign of terror to insure that the revolts were smashed and that there would be no further problem. The Soviets were prompted to demand the return of the Allied ambassadors to Moscow from Vologda.⁸⁵ As the terror continued the rumor of German troop intervention in Moscow grew. This, together with the repeated attempts to coerce the ambassadors to return to Moscow, led them to move to Archangel on 26 July. The continued instability of the

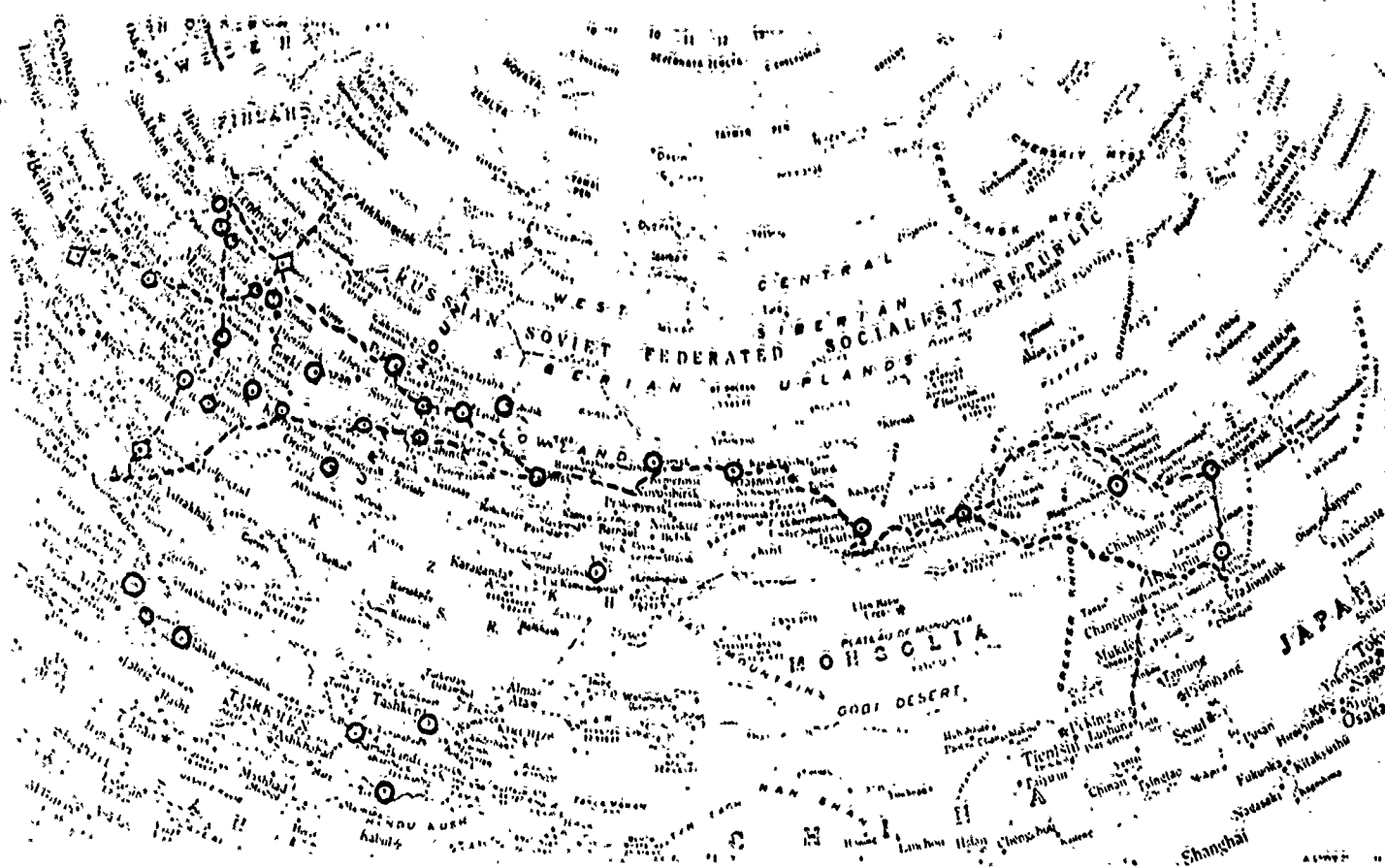
Russian situation caused the ambassadors to move under the British expedition's protection at Murmansk on 31 July.⁸⁶ This left the American interests in European Russia in the hands of the newly appointed consul general at Moscow, DeWitt C. Poole. The former consul would eventually become the senior American diplomat in Russia until withdrawal of the American forces from north Russia in 1919.

In July, the Germans became worried about the Czech successes. Now the Czechs, combined with the Allied assistance being provided General A. I. Denikin's Volunteer Army of the Don, could form a unified front with the counterrevolutionaries. The possible threat to the Germans prompted the prohibition by the Whites of further recruiting by the Volunteer Army and the order to arrest the officers in the force. Prior to 9 July, the Germans had been covertly supporting the Volunteer Army in order to keep the Bolshevik armed forces weak and scattered.⁸⁷

The Soviet government could do little more than protest the Allied actions and threaten to arm the prisoners of war against the proposed Allied intervention in Siberia. Internal unrest resulting from the murder of Count Mirbach, the problems of the famine in Russia, and the revolts in Moscow and Yaroslavl were enough to keep the Soviets occupied. Leon Trotsky was still building the Red Army and had to shift his emphasis from the counterrevolutionaries to the restoration of internal order.

German pressure on the western front acted as an impetus for the French and British to propose and get the Supreme War Council's sanction for Allied intervention in Russia. Support for the Czechs proved to be an effective argument in breaking White House resistance towards intervention. The American President proposed limitations on the nature of the Allied intervention in hopes of restricting the purposes of the

MAP OF RUSSIA WITH LOCATIONS OF THE PRISONER OF WAR CAMPS



Map of the Soviet Union, 1: 28,000,000, Rand McNally Cosmopolitan World Atlas, Enlarged "Planet Earth" Edition (Chicago: Rand McNally Co., 1971), p. 28.

expeditions. The idea of a "sterile operation" taking place in sovereign Russia, which would only benefit the Russians and not interfere in the internal affairs of the nation, was visionary. To the dismay of the Americans, none of the other Allies possessed the same virtuous motives in deciding to intervene.

AUGUST, 1918

The message traffic during August revealed the beginnings of a decrease in interest in the prisoner of war issue. Of the twenty-five dispatches which dealt with the prisoner of war problem, only six were tied directly to the plight of the Czech Legion in Siberia. Five of the seven Washington communications continued to link the two forces. The primary source of field messages remained in the Far East, where the war prisoners and Czechs were located and where America would make her largest contribution to the Allied intervention effort in Russia.

Even if no one knew, or admitted, that the Czechs were fighting the Bolshevik forces in Siberia, it would be difficult for the United States to avoid interference with Russian internal affairs, either when the American soldiers defended the Czechs or when they aided the Russians to form democratic governments in their areas of occupation. Both the Administration and the public ignored these ambiguities during the summer of 1918. It was easier for the government to declare that intervention was purely to aid the Czechs' safe passage through the attacking German prisoners of war and to foster Russian democratic ideals. Very few Americans perceived the intervention as being an act of war against the Soviets rather than against the Germans.⁸⁸

The Japanese delay in publishing an intervention proclamation

prompted Acting Secretary Frank Polk to cable Ambassador Morris in Tokyo to press the issue with the Japanese. Polk explained the seriousness of the situation faced by the Czechs; between Nikolsk and Khabarovsk reports indicated the presence of 9,000 Red Guards and 6,000 war prisoners. Unless the Japanese responded quickly, the small contingents of the other Allies would be wholly inadequate to carry out the goals as established by the Supreme War Council.⁸⁹

The Japanese responded officially on 2 August by declaring that it was sending "suitable forces" to Vladivostok in order to "relieve pressure" which was being exerted by the German and Austrian war prisoners against the Czechoslovaks passing through Siberia enroute to the western front. The Japanese purpose in supporting the intervention was solely "to fall in with the desires of the American government and also to be at harmony with the Allies."⁹⁰

The dispatches of 2 and 3 August deal primarily with the official Japanese and American statements regarding the military intervention in Russia. An exception is Admiral Knight's message to the Secretary of the Navy Daniels on 3 August, advising him of the critical situation in Siberia. Because the Czechs had been forced to fall back, Knight planned to commit the British contingent directly into the line rather than to keep them at Vladivostok. In Knight's opinion, the defeat of General Semenov had been worse than reported initially, and now the German forces were ten to twenty miles inside the Manchurian border.⁹¹ Consul Caldwell reported the following day from Vladivostok that German war prisoners were operating Russian gunboats in the mouth of the Amur River against the Czech forces. The Czechs had requested that Japanese naval vessels assist them against these forces in the river.⁹² John A. Ray, the former consul at Odessa

detailed to Tomsk, cabled that the Bolsheviks had been overthrown in Tomsk. Ray recommended prompt recognition be accorded to the new Tomsk liberal government, along with munitions and monetary support to prevent the dispatch of 300,000 Hungarian-Austrian prisoners to the western front.⁹³ Numbers had a way of growing in these times.

By 15 August, Consul Caldwell was pushing for expeditious Allied intervention to assist the beleaguered Czech forces along the Trans-Siberian Railway. Caldwell reported that their enemies were being armed faster than Allied assistance could arrive. In order to allow the liberation of the Czech forces divided at Baikal, the Czech National Council urged the Allies not to confine their operations to the Khabarovsk front. The Czech commander Dietrichs, a Russian, believed that 30,000 war prisoners could be organized against the 5,000 Czechs in the Chita-Baikal area. Unless the Allies rendered assistance, the Czechs would be unable to link up with their elements in the last six weeks of good weather in Siberia. Dietrichs analyzed the Bolshevik strategy:

...It is evident that the eastern group of armed German war prisoners will endeavor to break through to the west, join Germans advancing from Volga, and that strength of the eastern enemy group will increase as the Czechs retreat westward, enemy forces being augmented by recruits of war prisoners now disarmed by the Czechs.

In this attempt the eastern German-Hungarian group takes very small risk because they can rely upon food being supplied by Bolshevik authorities restored by their advance and in the event of reverse they would be no worse off than on Khabarovsk front, where a large proportion of them at critical moment appeared to be in prison camps at work.⁹⁴

Dietrich recognized the inherent problem of interfering with the repatriation of the Austrian and German prisoners, and he was realistic concerning the temporary support available from the liberal regimes which arose in the areas dominated by the Czech forces.

On 11 August, Consul Charles K. Moser sent a very irate cable from

Harbin to Secretary Lansing complaining that the press had published a notice of American intentions before he had received an official declaration. Vestnik Manchurii, the official organ of the Horvat government, published a bitter denunciation of the American Aide-Memoire:

The task of the Japanese-American military mission amounts solely to succoring the Czecho-Slovaks, who are threatened by the German and Magyar war prisoners; and the first step in aiding the Czecho-Slovaks consists in enabling them, as quickly as possible, in leaving Russia for the western front. From this it is concluded: first, that the Americans do not attach special significance to the formation of the Siberian front by the Germans; and secondly, that they leave it to the Russians to liquidate that front.

The chief care of the United States is to safeguard the war material sold by America to Russia and now in the ports of Vladivostok, Murmansk, and Archangel. In its desire to safeguard this valuable property, which may become of use to Russia, the Government at Washington shows its consideration for us further and says that military aid from the Allies would be too expensive for the Russians, and therefore it is better to let them spend their money on the restoration of the army and the feeding of hungry citizens...

The only effective means of guarding the above-mentioned property in Vladivostok is considered to be the occupation of Allied troops. Such occupation has already taken place in Murmansk and Archangel, but for the complete safety of the Vladivostok depots it may be necessary to clear the localities in the vicinity of Vladivostok of the Germans and Magyars.

If all the plans of America, as enumerated above, are carried out exactly, the result will be as follows: (1) The Allies will not help us to restore the front; (2) they will take the Czecho-Slovaks away from Russia as soon as possible; (3) they will occupy all our chief ports, guarding property for which money has not been paid to America; (4) they will leave Russia to disintegrate further, if the bacilli of disintegration be sufficiently strong.⁹⁵

The understandably irate Moser cabled: "Official statements circulated through general news agencies rather than through our own Government official mediums, established for the purpose, sure to cause embarrassment and bring about misunderstanding."⁹⁶

Consul Moser reported on 13 August that war prisoners were threatening the Manchuria Station.⁹⁷ On that same subject, Ambassador Morris in Tokyo explained that the Japanese planned to dispatch a 2,000 man force to augment the expected like number of Chinese to handle the Manchurian

railway protection.⁹⁸ On the 14th, Ambassador Ishii in Washington presented Secretary Lansing a statement concerning Japanese intentions in Manchuria. The "growing activities of the armed German and Austro-Hungarian prisoners in Siberia along the borders of Manchuria" constituted "a direct menace to Chinese territory." Japanese actions were designed to promote "relations of mutual confidence and good neighborhood" with the Chinese.⁹⁹ Morris had earlier revealed that the Japanese were using the alleged German invading force as justification to pressure the Chinese for an invitation to assist against these common enemies.¹⁰⁰ Despite Counselor Polk's advice to Chargé MacMurray in Peking to encourage "prompt and forceful action" by the Chinese, MacMurray disagreed.¹⁰¹ Chargé MacMurray stated that there was no truth whatsoever to the report of German forces entering Manchuria. He stated that the military governor of Heilung-kiang province had made an arrangement with the leaders of the mixed Bolshevik-war prisoner force to remain in Dauria. MacMurray did mention a secret protocol to which the Japanese had forced the Chinese to concede, allowing Japanese invasion of Chinese territory to fight the armed prisoners of war.¹⁰²

A Japanese battle in the Ussuri region beyond Lake Khanka with the Bolsheviks and the German prisoners justified the commitment of additional Japanese soldiers to Siberia. By the end of August, the 12th Japanese Division was bringing the remainder of its units, and the 3rd Division was being mobilized at Nagoya.¹⁰³

Consul Poole's 30 June dispatch, which recommended intervention and noted the influence of the Germans upon the Bolsheviks in Moscow, finally reached Washington on 11 August.¹⁰⁴ On the 23rd, Poole sent a photograph in the pouch as "living proof" that the Bolshevik forces had

succeeded in capturing Yaroslavl only by using direct German military aid.¹⁰⁵ Unfortunately, this picture is no longer in the files, and one cannot evaluate its authenticity. The American diplomats in the field went to extreme lengths to substantiate their charges concerning the prisoner threat to the Czech forces. Another old message from Samara, dating back to early June, was relayed through Sheldon Whitehouse, the Chargé d'Affaires in Stockholm. The message dealt with armed prisoners about Samara, the execution of fifty Austrians by the Czechs, and the claim that the Czechs continually fought German and Austrian prisoner elements in all their battles with the Bolsheviks.¹⁰⁶

In Washington the Provisional Government's Ambassador, Bakhmeteff, furnished a cable to Secretary Lansing from the Siberian government, in which the Czechs and organized forces of the new government were credited with the liberation of western Siberia from the Bolsheviks and armed war prisoners. According to the Omsk government, the Czechs had destroyed the authority of the Bolsheviks at Marinsk, Novo Nikolaesk, Tomsk, Naryn, Tobolsk, Barnaul, Semipalatinsk, Karkaralinsk, Atbassar, Troitsk and other cities, with Achinsk and Krasnoyarsk being occupied by forces of the temporary Siberian government. Work toward building a united anti-German front was cited as moving well.¹⁰⁷

British Chargé Colville A. Barclay passed information to Secretary Lansing that the Red Guards were forcing the Cossacks to join the war prisoners and that General Von Taube had established his headquarters at Blagoveshchensk.¹⁰⁸ On 20 August, Secretary Lansing received a Japanese intelligence report on the prisoner situation in Siberia, courtesy of the British Embassy. The prisoner summary stated that the headquarters was not at Karinskaya but with the main body at Chita. The total

number of forces from Verkhne Udinsk east was about 30,000 war prisoners and 15,000 Bolsheviks. Their intent was to operate along the Amur Railway in Ussuri to deal with the Czechs at Verkhne Udinsk or to fight General Semenov. The disposition of the enemy was:

Ussuri: 2,000 POW's, 3,000 Bolsheviks with 400 cavalry, artillery, two armored cars and two armored trains.
 Harborsk: 4,500 POW's, 6,000 Bolsheviks, artillery and a poison gas detachment
 Against Semenov: 2,000 POW's, 4,000 Bolsheviks, 2,000 cavalry, 1,000 Chinese and artillery.
 Chita: 500 POW's and 11,000 others armed.
 Verkhne Udinsk: 8,300 POW's, artillery, and 6,000 unarmed POW's.¹⁰⁹

Breckenridge Long told Secretary Lansing on 17 August that the Germans had about 15,000 troops in Manchuria, with reinforcements of Bolsheviks, Austrians, and Hungarians in Chita. He felt it absolutely essential to control the railroad between Manchuli and Baikal to open communications with the Czech forces.

The increased activities and present movements of the German and Austrian prisoners in Siberia seem to require more vigorous military treatment than this Government can give without diminishing its efforts in Europe, which would be unwise. Other Governments can contribute to that end and can furnish troops and munitions in sufficient force to insure the elimination of the enemy in Siberia. With this policy the Government of the United States is in full accord.¹¹⁰

Long early recognized American priorities and the President's desire to restrict the commitment of additional troops to the intervention effort. The only factor which Long neglected in his analysis was the conflict between Japanese and American interests in Asia.

After conferring with the President, Secretary Lansing published a memorandum on Siberian policy on 20 August, ironically coinciding with the arrival of American troops at Vladivostok:

This Government can not aid in equipping, transporting or maintaining any troops beyond the numbers agreed upon between the United States and Japan.

This Government is not in favor of proceeding west of Irkutsk in

relieving the Czecho-Slovaks in western Siberia.

This Government favors the retirement of the Czecho-Slovaks eastward from western Siberia as rapidly as safety will permit and the concentration of all troops in eastern Siberia where they should jointly operate against hostile forces along the Amur River and about Lake Baikal.

This Government prefers to defer a consideration of the future movements of the Czecho-Slovaks whether eastward to France or westward to Russia until after eastern Siberia has been cleared of enemies.¹¹¹

General Frederick C. Poole, the British commander at Murmansk had wanted the Czechs to link up with the Allies at Vologda. When the Czechs attempted to comply with this request they met heavy resistance from organized bands of German and Magyar prisoners, according to Consul Harris at Vladivostok.¹¹² The French had other motives. They sought to preserve French influence in Russia and to fight the spread of German power. Eventually, they concluded that to preserve their interests in Russia the existing Bolshevik government would have to be overthrown and eliminated as a threat forever. To the French the intervention was the fruit of this conclusion.¹¹³

In addition to failing in their attempts to link up with the Allies at Vologda, the Czechs urged the formation of a central government in Siberia. The Czech memorandum was presented to the Second Chelyabinsk Conference on 20 August. Their major concern was that while the Czech force gradually diminished, the Bolsheviks were steadily increasing their numbers by recruiting more Austrian and German war prisoners.¹¹⁴

The Japanese had haggled with the Americans for more than a month over the numbers of troops to be committed. Unbeknownst to the Americans at the time, the Japanese had already decided in June 1918 (in an appendix to their March 1918 war plan for the Far East), the exact numbers to be deployed in each sector. The Japanese General Staff believed that despite the fact that the expeditionary forces numbered only one-half the

strength of the enemy, the superior quality of the Japanese soldier and the operational superiority of the army made up the differences. Force levels were projected in the June appendix to the March 1918 War Plan for the Far East:

Maritime Territory:

German and Austrian POW's in the territory and along the Amur Railway, about 5,000.

Bolshevik forces, about 9,000 for a total of 14,000.

Japanese expeditionary forces, about 19,000.

Trans-Baikal Territory:

German and Austrian POW's in the territory and in Irkutsk, about 93,000.

Bolshevik forces, about 10,000.

Japanese expeditionary forces, about 51,000.

Chinese troops potentially available for joint operations, 10,000.¹¹⁵

The Soviets' boldness grew commensurate with the size and effectiveness of their armed forces. By 1 August 1918, in spite of mass desertions and defections, their strength had reached 330,000 soldiers, and by early September, 550,000.¹¹⁶ The organizational ability of Leon Trotsky as Commissar of War combined with Lenin's emphasis on providing the army with strong party cadre leadership to yield these recruiting successes. Until American troops landed at Vladivostok on 20 August, official pronouncements concerning intervention and America's role in the endeavor had been issued through the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs. Few top leaders in the Soviet hierarchy published comments on the intervention until Leon Trotsky did so on 23 August:

...According to the American statement, the intervention of the Allies is for the purpose of assisting the Czecho-slovaks against the German and Austro-Hungarian war prisoners who are attacking them. The participation of these prisoners in the struggle against the Czecho-slovaks is the most monstrous invention, as is the Japanese statement about the threat to the Siberian railroad from the Germans.

It is true that among the Soviet troops there are certain numbers of former war prisoners, revolutionary socialists, who became Russian citizens, who are ready to fight against any kind of imperialism, no matter what side it is. It must be said, however, that the internationalist soldiers of the Soviet Army do not constitute more than

1/25 of the entire number of Soviet troops.¹¹⁷

A statement from Lenin would have completed the Soviet policy statement. However, Lenin was denied the opportunity and never took the occasion later to attack American intervention. On 30 August 1918, V. I. Lenin was shot twice by an assassin and remained in critical condition for almost two weeks before starting to recover. Once again, the Red Terror was unleashed to deal with problems in Moscow.

The decision to intervene was only a small part of President Wilson's wartime calculations. Many scholars tend to treat Wilson, the United States government, Washington, and Secretary Lansing as interchangeable parts. Unlike Robert Lansing, Woodrow Wilson considered the Russian "problem" as a single issue, despite the recognizable differences between the situations in Siberia and north Russia. Wilson wanted to avoid action in either locale.¹¹⁸ Historian Eugene Trani contends that Wilson did not fear Japanese aggression in Siberia and was not willing to oppose Japan militarily. Robert Lansing's perception differed from the President's attitude. Problems of mobilization, strategy, the necessity to develop a world peace plan, and domestic politics all weighed heavily on the President.

His Russian policy...stemmed from certain long-standing beliefs about Russia, from information gained from people who had access to him, from hunches about implications of any American action, only at certain decisive moments, and most of all, from a feeling that he must cooperate with the Allies. In sum, it was crisis-oriented diplomacy; decisions were made under tremendous pressure.¹¹⁹

Newton Baker, the Secretary of War, felt that the government had "been literally beset" by the Russian question. President Wilson described himself as having "been sweating blood over the question of what is right and feasible (possible) to do in Russia."¹²⁰ Wilson later confessed to Dr. Thomas Masaryk, the Czech leader, that he felt "no confidence in my

personal judgment about the complicated situation in Russia."¹²¹

Walter Lippmann made an analysis of newspaper articles that had appeared in the New York Times during the five and one-half months between the Russian withdrawal from the war and the American decision to intervene. Lippmann found 285 articles which discussed the problem of intervention. Those articles which relate directly to the prisoner of war scare and to the trapped Czechs are marked with an asterisk:

* German Domination of Russia	49
Russian Anti-Bolshevism	34
Japanese Intervention	69
Allied Intervention	48
American Intervention	26
* The Czechoslovaks	31
The Red Peril	5
* Prisoners in Siberia Peril	3
Relief for Russia	3
Japanese in Peril	2
Guarding Stores	2
Anti-Intervention	13

Lippmann found the most prevalent justification for Allied military action to be the German domination of Russia.

The argument was simple: the eastern front is gone. Germany has an unblocked path through Russia and Siberia to the Pacific, through Russia and the Caucasus to India. Germany will organize Russian resources and perhaps Russian manpower; then she will win the war. Somewhere or other an eastern front must be reestablished. The Bolsheviks will not and cannot do this. The problem is therefore to be solved by Allied, Japanese, and American soldiers cooperating with Russian anti-Bolsheviks. The providential rebellion of the Czechoslovaks in May, June and July provides the nucleus.

This argument dominates the news in the Times up to August, and more or less until the armistice with Germany...After the armistice intervention is justified by the Red Peril; before the armistice it is justified by the German Peril....¹²²

Specific Presidential guidance to the War Department established the size of the American expeditionary force which landed at Vladivostok on 20 August 1918. Major General William S. Graves, the former principal assistant to the Army Chief of Staff, arrived in Vladivostok on 3 September to command the American troops in Siberia.¹²³ The American 27th and 31st

Infantry Regiments from the Philippines were supported by a field hospital, an ambulance company, and signal company. General Graves brought 5,000 soldiers from the 8th Division at Camp Fremont, California.¹²⁴

This plan differed from the original State Department estimate that two regiments of 7,649 combatants with 1,375 support soldiers at Vladivostok were all that would be required for the Siberian expedition.¹²⁵

With the landing of the American troops in Russia, the American field diplomats sought to support the expedition by providing Washington ample justification for the decision to intervene.

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THE INTERVENTION PERIOD

Message traffic on the prisoner of war issue dropped drastically in September to a total of thirteen transmissions, eleven from the field and two from within the Department of State. Only seven messages tied the Czech predicament to the war prisoner problem. The third and final German offensive on the western front had been contained and the Allied Powers were on the verge of launching a successful counteroffensive. The relative successes of the Czech Legion in dominating the Siberian arena and controlling the Trans-Siberian Railway lessened American concern. A final factor was the publicized contribution which was being made by the American troops in France. During the final three months of 1918, dispatches averaged six per month, with only single monthly transmissions from the Washington arena. The Czechs, whose predicament had justified American participation in the Allied intervention in Russia, were mentioned in only two messages per month.

The Far East continued to provide the majority of the prisoner traffic in September. On 7 September, Consul General Ernest L. Harris at Irkutsk reported the Bolshevik's attacks on Samara. Harris believed that the Bolshevik successes along the front from Penza to the north of Kazan were attributable to German-directed artillery.¹ Another message from Harris on the 8th stated:

Military prisoners at large still causing trouble in Irkutsk, Tomsk, and other Siberian towns. German officers are frequently entertained by wealthy citizens. Germans in the guise of Swedish agents make mysterious trips to Semipalatinsk and elsewhere. Consular Corps, Irkutsk, have protested against and demanded that such prisoners be returned to prison camps and strictly guarded.²

The wealthy Czarist families sought to secure themselves against

Bolshevik encroachments by treating the "conquerors" well. Good relations with the former German prisoners kept Red Guard forces out of the area, which preserved the status of the well-to-do. Vice Consul Williams reported from Samara that Kazan had been captured on 7 August, and that Samara was surrounded by 10,000 Red Guards and war prisoners. Only the persistent heroism of a small group of Czechs and Serbians had prevented the capture of the city.³ By the end of the month the situation at Samara was critical. The Czechs and Russians who were assisting them were outnumbered five to one by the Red Guard elements. While the defenders' numbers dwindled, the Red Guards continued to recruit prisoners to increase their strength. Eight hundred Serbians in the city were without weapons. From Irkutsk, Alfred R. Thomson prophesied that the loss of Samara "...with large quantities of valuable supplies to Germany [would give] Germans control of the whole Volga Valley and practically all Russia."⁴

From Vladivostok on 12 September, Major General William Graves, the American commander in Siberia, stated that the Czech General Gaida reported the Trans-Siberian Railway clear from Vladivostok to Samara. The Czechs claimed to have confined most of the German and Austro-Hungarian war prisoners in Siberia to camps organized and operated by friendly Russians.⁵ The Japanese did not believe the Czechs had been as successful as General Graves reported. A 5 September message from Ambassador Roland Morris in Tokyo stated that Japanese fears of war prisoner activity in the Amur region had been the basis for operations at Karymskaya. In addition, a third Japanese division had been mobilized at Ujina for Siberian duty.⁶

From Peking, John MacMurray forwarded to Secretary Lansing Harris' message that there were between 30,000 and 40,000 Bolsheviks and Austro-German war prisoners in the vicinity of Ekaterinburg under the command of

an Austrian general who had fought at Przemysl. Consul Harris did not believe that the 12,000 Czechs in the area could handle the Red Guards.⁷ The Assistant Military Attache at Peking, Captain Homer Slaughter, stated that the Bolshevik Party had practically ceased to exist in Siberia. It was composed now of a "small and criminally-inclined minority directed by Germans and depending on armed prisoners for support." Czech operations in the Ekaterinburg-Perm area were opposed by Magyar forces commanded by German and Austrian officers.⁸

In north Russia at Archangel, Ambassador David R. Francis blamed the armed German and Austrian prisoners and the Red Guards under Austro-German commanders for preventing that region of Russia from receiving food, which was abundant at other locations.⁹

By September the military situation in north Russia had become quite complex. Major General Frederick C. Poole had commanded the British forces in north Russia and then became the joint commander with the arrival of the other Allied contingents. On 4 September 1918, 4,800 American soldiers under the command of Lieutenant Colonel George E. Stewart arrived in north Russia via Great Britain.¹⁰ The peak strength of Allied expeditionary forces in the north was: British, 18,400; Americans, 5,100; French, 1,800; Italians, 1,200; Serbians, 1,000; Russians and all others, 20,000. The grand total was 47,500.¹¹ The original British Mission, composed primarily of officers and noncommissioned officers, had been sent to Russia in the summer of 1917 to instruct and assist the faltering Provisional Government forces. They remained instead to recruit and instruct anti-Bolshevik Russian elements in north Russia, with the goal of establishing a force of 30,000 combatants.¹² Hence, these mixed units consisted of Russian, Polish, Lithuanian, Finnish, Czech, Estonian, and

Chinese detachments.¹³ Nearly one half the rifle strength of the Allied forces in north Russia consisted of levied units, which usually proved to be less than reliable. The British lack of success with their Slavo-British Legion, the French Foreign Legion, the Polish Legion, and the Finnish Legion caused American Ambassador Francis to cancel his plans to recruit an American-Slavic force.¹⁴

General Poole operated under instructions received from the British War Office on 6 August. His mission was:

To resist German influence and penetration in Northern Russia and enable the Russians to take the field again on the side of the Allies; to establish communication with the Czechs and with their cooperation secure control of the Archangel-Vologda-Ekaterinburg railway and the river and railway line between Archangel and Viatka; to reestablish the eastern front by a junction of the North Russian forces with the Siberian troops of Admiral Kolchak.¹⁵

Ambassador Francis supported the British concept:

I shall encourage American troops to obey the commands of General Poole in his effort to effect a junction with the Czechoslovaks and to relieve them from the menace which surrounds them; that menace is nominally Bolshevik but is virtually inspired and directed by Germany.¹⁶

Field Marshal Edmund S. Ironside took command of the Allied forces in north Russia at the end of September. General Ironside was shocked to find Austrian prisoners of war in the Archangel jail. These prisoners had been in several prisons for over four years without any consideration being given to their release. Ironside's solution to the problem was to put hundreds to work as stevedores under Allied guard and to allow the others to enlist in the various national legions for military training.¹⁷ General Ironside supported the American justification for intervention in Russia, the threatening German and Austrian war prisoners, when he issued the following proclamation:

To all Germans at present in the service of the Bolsheviks: The Allied command is prepared to receive all Germans, Czechs, Latvians, and all inhabitants of the Russian Baltic provinces who might want to

surrender...They will be treated as prisoners of war...The only desire of the Allied command is to reestablish order in Russia and it is the duty of every European patriot to help it achieve its object.¹⁸

Secretary Lansing advised Francis at Archangel that the Allies need not fear fighting Russian Bolsheviks, since recent Allied battles had been exclusively with German and Austrian prisoners.¹⁹ Reinforcing this perception the White Russian Ambassador, Boris A. Bakhmeteff, assured Breckenridge Long on 17 September that the democratic Omsk government was "forming an army to fight against the German and Austrian prisoners opposing the Czechs on the Volga River (and) on the Ekaterinburg front."²⁰ The newly established liberal democratic governments in Siberia were anxious to demonstrate support for the Allied intervention force. Their motives were tied to hopes for Allied recognition of a separate Siberian republic supported and protected by the expeditionary forces.

American military support of these anti-Bolshevik elements in Siberia became apparent to the Russian liberals when the United States forces engaged the "enemy" as part of the joint Allied command under Japanese direction. When the Japanese moved towards Khabarovsk against the Austro-Hungarian war prisoners, General Graves allowed the American 27th Infantry Regiment to take part in the successful attacks on Blagoveshchensk, which fell on 18 September. This operation followed the Ussuri campaign. The Japanese 12th Division, assisted by American and Chinese forces, was "to defeat the Austro-German prisoners and Bolshevik troops, who are to the east of Zeya and important points along the Amur railway."²¹

The justification for American troop participation was based on the Austro-German war prisoner threat. General Graves later commented:

I learned that the 27th Infantry (Colonel Styer) was taking part in a combined action against the enemy. The enemy being represented to me as Bolsheviks and armed prisoners. I was satisfied that the American troops were not departing from announced policy of the United States Government to refrain from taking any part in Russian affairs.²²

This was the only joint operation in which the American forces participated in Siberia. After the Khabarovsk-Blagoveshchensk operation, General Graves turned down all later Japanese requests.²³

Arthur Bullard, the second director of the American wartime propaganda program in Russia, maintained that by the end of September when he arrived in Siberia, the legend of the German and Austrian prisoners of war on the Ussuri front "had been exploded like a proverbial whiff of grapeshot." According to Bullard, the Ussuri front which was supposedly held by thousands of armed prisoners had melted away into the taiga as the Japanese-led Allied forces moved northward towards Khabarovsk.²⁴ Bullard oversimplified the complex issue. His comments were based upon very limited observations made in a very secure area of Siberia controlled by the Allies and the Czechs.

The Khabarovsk-Blagoveshchensk operations occurred just after General Graves assumed command in Siberia. It was after the operation that Graves realized that the "enemy" facing the Allies in Siberia was an integral part of the Bolshevik forces. The armed war prisoners were a threat to the Czechs, but for reasons not made clear in the guidance provided in the Aide-Mémoire. Captain Ira C. Nicholas, a former member of the 27th Infantry Regiment in Siberia, supported the earlier belief of the American Siberian commander.

The Allied troops, Japanese, British, French and Kalmakoff forces encountered considerable resistance early in August, 1918, from a force composed of Bolshevik, German, and Magar(sic) men.²⁵

This perception was common among most Americans in Siberia.

To amplify the decision of the Supreme War Council to support Allied intervention in Russia, that body provided Allied objectives to the participating nations in order to coordinate intervention efforts. General Tasker Bliss sent these objectives to Washington on 14 September:

...In the Northern Russia and Eastern Siberia theatres the Allies must aim at attaining the following objects: (1) To prevent the Central Powers from exploiting such resources as may be available in Russia; (2) To collect round nuclei of Allied forces all anti-German elements of resistance; to train these elements; to organize them; and so to make them into a force fit to fight against Germany; (3) To bring assistance as soon as possible to the Czecho-Slovaks, who are in a critical position owing to Bolshevik propaganda; also owing to the military support given to the Bolsheviks by the Germans and by enemy prisoners of war in increasing numbers, and whose organization continues to expand; (4) Finally, should circumstances permit, to build up again an Eastern front by continuing the various operations undertaken in the different regions of Russia (Northern Russia, Siberia and the Caucasus).²⁶

President Woodrow Wilson disagreed with the Allied objectives, as indicated by his declaration on 27 September. Wilson stated that any attempted military activities west of the Urals would be impossible for the United States to support. Furthermore, the President urged the retirement of all Czech forces to the eastern side of the Ural Mountains.²⁷

While American diplomats abroad continued to justify American intervention based on the prisoner of war threat to the Czech forces, the American President sought to limit the degree of American involvement in Russian affairs. Unfortunately, presidential guidance was slow in reaching the field, and in its absence Ambassador Francis supported the British use of American forces in north Russia to reach the goals outlined in General Bliss' message. On the other hand, General Graves in Siberia recognized that joint operations with the Japanese would violate the limitations imposed by the Aide-Mémoire. These differences of perception would continue to affect direction and coordination of the Allied intervention efforts during the final months of 1918. Wilson elaborated

further when he questioned the wisdom of Ambassador Francis' plans to organize an American-Slavic Legion in north Russia, Wilson believed that "we cannot maintain an army, our own or another, in Northern Russia, much as we should wish to do so....I think we ought to apprise him very definitely of the limiting facts."²⁸ The State Department complied with the President's directive.

The British War Cabinet saw Siberian intervention as a threat to their economic interests in the region:

There was a growing understanding in London that Britain's Siberian policy - with the primary objective of hampering the Germans in Russia - had helped open up Siberia to the Japanese and to throw that entire area into a state of mass confusion. An end to the war could only complicate rather than solve the muddled situation.²⁹

Now, the two major Western powers involved in the intervention began to question the utility of continuing the venture. Links with the Soviets had been severed entirely in Moscow when the Allied consular corps had evacuated the city for Archangel in late September. American reports from Russia were limited to the Siberian and north Russian areas, which further distorted the picture of the Russian situation and confused the policy-makers in Washington.

Growing problems with the Czechs came with the growth and professional competence of the Red Army fighting the counterrevolutionaries throughout Russia. From Chelyabinsk, Consul Jay Jameson asked for immediate American troop presence in the area to assist the beleaguered Czech forces. The failure of the Americans to join the Japanese-British advances created a feeling among the Czechs that the Americans were betraying the Czechs in their fight against the Germans. Jameson emphasized the impact of German propaganda upon the Czechs in Chelyabinsk.³⁰ At Archangel, Consul General D. C. Poole credited the recent Bolshevik capture

of Kazan to the infusion of German leadership in the Red Guards and separate German units.³¹ Another dispatch from Poole, dated 23 August, reached the State Department on 17 October. This portfolio contained the photograph which "proved" German complicity in Bolshevik operations.³²

Field reports continued to be sketchy and very limited in November. The total number of messages dealing with the prisoner issue stayed at six; only one related to the Czech problem. Apparently, interest in the Czechs was gradually waning in Washington and in the field. The collapse of the Central Powers and an armistice were imminent. Russia was assuming its traditional backwater role in American foreign relations.

Ambassador Francis raised the nationalistic ire of the Czechs at Irkutsk when he sent a message to Consul General Harris praising the "liberty-loving Poles":

...Czecho-Slavs and Yugo-Slavs have also been recognized by my government as Allies and American troops are advancing from Archangel and Vladivostok to reinforce the valiant soldiers who are now so courageously struggling with armed German and Austrian war prisoners and Bolsheviks under German and Austrian officers.³³

Unbeknownst to the American ambassador the opposite was actually the case, and the Czechs had openly expressed their concern that the Americans were betraying them by not joining the advancing Japanese and British. The whole message reveals how far out of touch with reality Francis was in his isolated location at Archangel. Jay Jameson at Chelyabinsk provided a political report on conditions in the cities of central and western Siberia from Chita to Ekaterinburg. Significantly, Jameson stated that the war prisoners were a constant menace because the successes of the armed prisoners led to further releases from other camps.³⁴

Ambassador Bakhmeteff in Washington forwarded another plea from the government at Omsk for American assistance. He cited the approach of

the Bolsheviks and Germans at the Urals as a threat to the restitution of Russian national unity. Germany's triumph in the Urals could secure inexhaustible resources by which the Central Powers might continue the war, drastically changing the correlation and direction of international forces in Europe and the Far East.³⁵

The remainder of the traffic dealt with handling the prisoners of war the Allies encountered while conducting operations in Russia. The British previously had proposed concentrating the Siberian prisoners in Manchuria, where they recommended that the Allied forces winter.³⁶ The commander of the Russian forces operating with the British in Siberia, General Boldyrev, had suggested the same solution to Major General A. V. Knox, commander of British forces in Siberia:

All war prisoners of non-Slavic origin should be interned and kept under guard in prison camps. It would be still better if these camps were situated in Transbaikalia or the Far East, where American or Japanese troops could guard them.³⁷

Robert Lansing assured the British Chargé, Colville Barclay, that prisoners found in camps and those captured by the Allies would be cared for at Allied expense under American and Japanese control, but the British were dissatisfied.³⁸ They did not like the American insistence that they control only those prisoners east of Lake Baikal. The British believed that the Americans and Japanese should guard all prisoners in Siberia in order to protect the Allies' extended detachments in Siberia.³⁹ The Americans held to their position. The different Allied attitudes towards the war prisoners created the misunderstandings in the Far East. The Americans believed that they were fulfilling their mission to contain the prisoners by assuming some camp control, while the British saw the U.S. role to be active military engagement against the Bolsheviks and their prisoner allies to assist the Czechs.

With the departure of Ambassador Francis from Russia, Consul General DeWitt C. Poole became the senior American representative in Russia until his departure in 1919. Poole vigorously supported the use of American and British troops to protect those anti-Bolshevik elements that had supported the Allies against both Germany and Bolshevism and who had formed a liberal regime in the northern region. Poole was unable to convince President Wilson of the need to combat the Bolshevik elements with American soldiers.⁴⁰ With the signing of the European armistice, Consul General Poole queried the State Department concerning the status of American policy in Russia. The guidance he received was:

As already made quite clear by this Government, American forces were sent to Archangel only to safeguard Russian stores and supplies and to protect the port of Archangel from attacks which were being organized or directed in whole or in part by German and Austrian prisoners of war.⁴¹

The armistice had not materially altered the situation. The United States was still legally at war with Germany and obligated to continue with the original purposes of the intervention.⁴² This strict interpretation of the meaning of an armistice as a temporary cessation of hostilities did not coincide with military interpretations. To the soldiers of the expeditionary force the war was over for all practical purposes. Continuation of the war effort until the signing of the peace treaty was contrary to all previous American wartime experiences.

The British supported the strict meaning of an armistice, also. Economic interests had prevailed despite conflicting military considerations.

Leaving aside the fact that we shall be deserting those whom we have encouraged to expect assistance against the excesses of Bolshevism, we should be in danger of losing for an unknown period the resources of Siberia, which are indispensable for reconstruction after the war. It is unnecessary to emphasize the importance of maintaining our hold on the resources, both from the point of view of denying them to the Bolsheviks and as a guarantee for the acknowledgement of their financial obligation to us by whatever Russian Government

ultimately assumes control.⁴³

General Graves assumed the responsibility for the security and treatment of the former German and Austrian war prisoners in the camps about Vladivostok and Khabarovsk. He stated that "...the treatment of those men was a disgrace to modern civilization..." because the Russians could not feed them nor would they allow them their freedom.⁴⁴ Channing's book, Siberia's Untouched Treasure, contains a picture of several Turkish soldiers who had been captured in 1914 and 1915, and who were found almost starving in a prison camp near Vladivostok.⁴⁵

In November, the American 27th Infantry Regiment assumed responsibility for the Krasnoya Retskaya prison camp located about twelve miles from Khabarovsk. This camp contained 2,000 officers captured by the Russians in the offensives at Stanislaw and Pryzemyel. After the Russians turned the camp over to Captain Larkins and Company E, the prisoners of war gained weight and regained their health with American food, routine, and medical treatment. When the Americans were leaving Russia, many of the former prisoners wanted to enlist in the American army as soldiers and valets.⁴⁶ Captain Ira Nicholas cited the reorganization and improvement of this camp as one of the outstanding accomplishments of the 27th Infantry Regiment.⁴⁷

With the armistice signed and Czechoslovak nationality a major issue of the peace negotiations, the Czech National Council sought to build the image of the Czech contributions which helped to win the war. Professor Thomas Masaryk reminded the Allies that in Siberia "...even the Germans of Bohemia began to join our Army." These inductees were formed into labor contingents.⁴⁸ The Czechs had willingly allowed all elements to join their ranks in Russia. At the end of the war the Czechs had

92,000 soldiers in Russia, 12,000 in France, 24,000 in Italy (with a backup reserve of 54,000 men), to total 182,000 troops on the side of the Allies.

The armistice in November brought significant changes in the attitudes and policies of the Allied Powers towards Russia. The British reaction was to accommodate the economic pressures at home by continuing trade with Siberia and saddling the Americans and the Japanese with prisoner of war security and expenses. The Czechs realized that with the end of the European war their obligation to the Allied Powers was fulfilled. The biggest problems faced by the Czechs were evacuation from Siberia to Europe and, as part of the peace accords, the establishment of an independent Czechoslovak state. Allied retention of the forces in Siberia served to focus interest upon the plight of the Czechs.

The Americans faced other issues. In Russia, Consul General Poole supported the use of American troops in north Russia as protection for the loyal Russians who had formed an anti-Bolshevik government at Murmansk. Poole had the same sentiments as the former ambassador, David R. Francis. Poole's problem after the armistice was the status of American troops in Russia, especially after the President applied severe restrictions upon the use of American forces. General Graves adhered to the vague guidelines of the Aide-Mémoire and restricted the use of American troops in joint operations with the Japanese. Graves' interpretation fit the idea of a "sterile" intervention which would not interfere in the internal affairs of the sovereign nation. The State Department sent no new guidance in December to assist the commanders on the scene.

The message traffic for December reached a total of six messages, five of which came from the widely scattered areas ranging from Rumania to Tokyo to Paris. The Czechs were only mentioned in two of the

dispatches. Despite the presence of two American expeditionary forces in Russia, interest in wartime commitments was greatly overshadowed by the post war peace negotiations and discussion of a world peace organization. The American commitment to intervention was not forgotten, but the United States government sought to treat it as a minor issue.

To Lansing, Ambassador Francis explained his earlier message to Consul General Harris at Irkutsk which had hailed the Polish support of the Allied cause in Russia. Francis was concerned that the Polish war prisoners would side with the Bolsheviks against the Czechs. He further explained that late receipt of the 3 August Russian-Siberian policy caused him to leave American troops under British control in north Russia for their operations down the Murmansk railroad and up the Dvina River.⁵⁴

The American Minister in Rumania, Charles J. Vopicka, felt that the return of the Bolsheviks to power in the Ukraine merited the commitment of an American army to Rumania. The army was justified since the main elements of the Red Guards were Austrian and Hungarian war prisoners supported by 50,000 Letts and 40,000 Chinese workmen. The remainder of the army was composed of conscripted Russians.⁵⁵

The Volunteer Army in the Ukraine was concerned whether or not the Allies planned to continue supporting their operations. With the war over the Volunteer Army sought an immediate exchange of prisoners to reduce the strengths of the Red Guards fighting them.⁵⁶

Roland Morris reported on 28 December that the Japanese felt that they had accomplished their goal of averting the grave danger to the Czechs by the armed German and Austrian prisoners of war. However, having accomplished this goal, the Japanese saw no need to further reduce their forces in Siberia. The Japanese saw a need to maintain order and

security in the chaotic areas of Siberia. Tokyo was still disgruntled by Secretary Lansing's message of 16 November which was part of a continuing American effort to persuade the Japanese to reduce the size of their intervention force in Russia.⁵⁷

President Wilson, concerned about Congressional approval of his plans for the post-war world, tried to avoid decisions or actions which would focus public attention on the continued American military presence in Russia. However, the American public, the press, and congressional leaders would not let the issue remain dormant. The friction between the Executive Branch of the government and other political forces during the post-war period is beyond the scope of this study. Yet, the obvious inconsistencies in the Allies' decision to continue the intervention, combined with considerable U.S. public pressure to end the affair, created for Wilson a terrible dilemma from which he could not escape.

Barely seven weeks after the armistice, the Soviets had to deal with an external threat which required more forces than were already committed to dealing with the internal counterrevolutionaries. Instead of the Germans, now the Allies became the primary concern of the Soviets because they posed a definite threat to the revolution and new government.⁵⁸ 1919 heralded new military operations along the Dvina and Vaga Rivers in north Russia by the British-led intervention forces. Red Guard counterattacks forced the Allies to withdraw toward their bases. American Consul General Poole recounted that one of his principal occupations in Archangel "was taking every possible step to make sure that American forces were not used for offensive purposes, that we were there after the armistice in a strictly defensive

position."⁵⁹

While the Americans were striving to minimize their active participation in the offensive fighting, the British continued their wartime policies of providing consumer goods for Siberia and facilitating Siberian exports. They proposed a liberalization of the blockade restrictions by treating Siberia as a neutral nation. The blockade around Russia was maintained because the British were still fighting Germans in Russia. Additionally, the British sponsored exploration of a new trade route via the Kara Sea and the Ob and Irkysk Rivers during the summer months. This route avoided the long, expensive and hazardous transit via the Trans-Siberian Railway better to meet military, commercial and political needs.⁶⁰

From London, Ambassador John W. Davis wired Bruce Lockhart's final memorandum on the "Internal Situation in Russia," written on 7 November 1918. Lockhart's report covered the period from 28 January to 30 September 1918, and contradicted his pro-interventionist stand prior to the Allied decision to intervene.

...There are also a certain number of troops formed from enemy prisoners. These are mainly Hungarians. They may be divided into two classes: (1), those who are genuine Internationalists and (2), those who joined the Red Army to avoid going back to fight with the German and Austrian Armies against the Allies. From what I have seen of them they are certainly not acting on instructions from the German or Austrian Governments...The stories about the German officers and German troops in the Bolshevik armies should be received with caution. We shall never understand the Bolshevik movement or appreciate its danger if we continue to regard it merely as a toy of German imperialism....

...Our victories over Germany have removed our original pretext for intervention, and have at the same time strengthened the positions of the Bolsheviks (1) by raising their hopes for a revolution in Austria and Germany, and (2) by increasing their power in the Ukraine, Poland, and the other Russian districts at present occupied by Germany...Allied intervention is a guarantee of this order. No other policy can promise the same results, or the same security.⁶¹

Lockhart's insight and perception was disregarded by the British and overlooked by American policy makers. The British regarded these observations as blasphemous and typical of a dedicated servant who had obviously come under great mental strain in Russia.

The former American ambassador was charged by Secretary Lansing with answering George Chicherin's letter to the President which covered Allied intervention and the League of Nations. Chicherin contended that:

...for some time attempts have been made to create a pretext for a war between Russia and the United States of North America by spreading calumnies to the effect that German prisoners of war had seized the Siberian railway, but your own officers and then Colonel Robins, the head of your Red Cross Mission, were able to satisfy themselves that these allegations were absolutely false....⁶²

David R. Francis replied to the 24 October letter on 22 January 1919, from London. Francis, no doubt, received considerable pleasure in having been given another opportunity to deal with Colonel Raymond Robins.

Allied missions had positive evidence that German-Austrian war prisoners were being armed and German officers were instructing Bolshevik forces. While German-Austrian prisoners may now be free to return home, the fact remains that Bolsheviks are propagandizing among prisoners and offering every inducement to join the Red Army....⁶⁴

The American Peace Commission at Paris received Francis' reply and forwarded it to the Soviets. Consul General Ernest L. Harris supported the beliefs of Ambassador Francis concerning Colonel Raymond Robins when he reported:

In May 1918 Robbins(sic) and I travelled on the same train from Omsk to Irkutsk...Robbins(sic) stated to me that no German and Austrian prisoners of war had joined the Bolshevik army up to May 1, 1918. Robbins(sic) knew that statement was absolutely false. In various parts of Russia prisoners of war under the title of Internationalists had joined the Red Army and anarchists in large numbers long before this time. I had been a witness to this in Samarkand, Tashkent, Samara, Omsk and Irkutsk already in March and April. The first attack against Czechs in Irkutsk was made by armed prisoners of war. I had several bodies disinterred all in Austrian uniforms in order definitely prove case...In my judgment Robbins(sic) is the type of

man who would play the role of a Lenin or Trotsky in America if conditions were favorable.⁶⁴

During February, 1919, the United States sought to arrange a conference on Princes Island with the various anti-Bolshevik and Bolshevik elements in Russia. The purpose was to present a unified Russian position for the peace negotiations. Despite American efforts to convince the counterrevolutionary elements that the plans for the conference were not intended to be pro-Bolshevik, the White Russians, with French support, ultimately rejected the entire notion for fear of giving added dignity and recognition to the Bolsheviks.⁶⁵

The failure of the Princes Island Conference led to a British proposal to send a special emissary to the Bolshevik government. On 18 February, Secretary Lansing ordered William C. Bullitt, a staff member of the American delegation at Paris, to go to Moscow. Bullitt was "...to make a report on the general situation in Russia, and find out what peace conditions were acceptable to the Soviet government. The mission was to be a secret from all except the British delegation."⁶⁶ The Americans and British agreed on the substance of the proposals: cessation of hostilities on all fronts, continued occupation by the de facto governments of the territory which they controlled, free right of entry into Soviet Russia for all Allied subjects, general amnesty to all political prisoners on both sides, restoration of trade relations, and withdrawal of Allied troops.⁶⁷ Bullitt reached Petrograd on 8 March and spent the remainder of the month in discussions with the Soviets. The Soviets imposed a 10 April suspense on the British-American approval of the resulting "Text of Projected Peace Proposals by the Allied and Associated Governments." The war prisoner problem was specifically addressed in Article 5:

All prisoners of war of non-Russian powers detained in Russia, likewise all nationals of these powers now in Russia to be given full facilities for repatriation. The Russian prisoners of war in whatever foreign country they may be, likewise all Russian nationals, including the Russian soldiers and officers abroad and those serving in all foreign armies to be given full facilities for repatriation.⁶⁸

Although Prime Minister Lloyd George and Minister Balfour were sympathetic to Bullitt's report, President Wilson would not discuss the proposals with him directly. When the 10 April deadline was reached without any American commitment, Bullitt resigned in disgust, bitterly criticizing the American President and the Peace Conference.⁶⁹

While deliberations took place on the feasibility of a Princes Island Conference and the practicality of sending a special emissary to deal with the Soviets, the President made up his mind to withdraw American troops from north Russia. His 20 February decision was broadcast to American forces via radio, and provisions were made to concentrate the American soldiers about Archangel and Murmansk by May for an early summer departure.⁷⁰

While the problems of Russian representation and Soviet peace proposals were discussed at the international level, the Allies in Russia were faced again with the prisoner problem - their own personnel who had been captured by the Bolshevik forces. William Bullitt managed to deal with the problem in the text of proposals which were ultimately disregarded by the Americans. The Military Commissar of the 6th Red Guards Army had already dealt with the American prisoner problem by declaring:

...Those of them who will prefer in the spring to work as farmers as many of the German and Austrian prisoners did, will be given the same right to settle on land, now owned by the people of Russia, as our own Russian peasants get.⁷¹

This proposal by N. N. Kuznia increased American concern even more, since withdrawal of United States forces had been announced.

The American forces in north Russia began withdrawing from Archangel on 3 June 1919, with the last two elements, railway transportation companies to operate the Murmansk Railway, departing on 30 July.⁷²

President Wilson avoided the Russian problem officially until he answered a Senate Resolution Concerning the American Troops in Siberia on 25 July 1919. The prisoner of war issue was discussed in Appendix III of that response:

The net result was the successful reunion of the separate Czecho-Slovak armies and the substantial elimination in Eastern Siberia of the active efforts of enemy prisoners of war. A period of relative quiet then ensued.

This measure was taken in conjunction with Japan and in concert of purpose with the other Allied Powers, first of all to save the Czecho-Slovak armies which were threatened with destruction by hostile armies apparently organized by, and often largely composed of, enemy prisoners of war. The second purpose was to steady any efforts of the Russians at self-defense, or the establishment of law and order in which they might be willing to accept assistance.

Partisan bands under leaders having no settled connection with any organized government and bands under leaders whose allegiance to any settled authority is apparently temporary and transitory are constantly menacing.⁷³

A year after the publication of the Aide-Mémoire, the President continued to maintain that the prisoners of war who threatened the Czech forces were the basis for American intervention and its continuation.

Winston Churchill, the British Secretary of State for War, told the House of Commons on 29 July much the same thing:

Intervention in Russia was originally in the nature of a military operation against Germany, and as such it had proved most effective. Before the step was taken German divisions were being sent from the Eastern front to the Western front at the rate of from six to eight a month. From the time the allied forces landed at Archangel no German division was withdrawn from the East.⁷⁴

The last British soldiers departed north Russia in September 1919, ending the longest Western intervention operation.

The two key American field diplomats in Russia provided final

remarks on the situation after returning to the United States. DeWitt C.

Poole wrote his memorandum on 12 August 1919:

...The subsequent relations of the Germans with the Bolsheviki are not so clearly established but the evidence in hand is sufficient to prove beyond reasonable doubt that the Bolsheviki received aid from time to time from Berlin. My own intimate contact with the Bolsheviki during five to six months convinced me of the existence of a special obligation owed by the Bolsheviki in that quarter.

Chicherin admitted to me personally that the Germans had brought pressure to bear concerning the Czecho-slovaks and I had confirmation of this through other channels....⁷⁵

David R. Francis supported these contentions of Poole on 15 September 1919, from Rye Beach, New Hampshire:

...All of the records of the State Department will show that I have contended from the beginning of the Bolshevik Revolution that Lenin and Trotsky were German agents, and subsequent developments have not only strengthened my position but demonstrated the truth thereof....⁷⁶

Both men were convinced throughout their tenure in Russia of the German affiliation with the Soviets. This sentiment was reflected throughout Francis' correspondence to the State Department, while Poole capitalized more upon the prisoner of war issue only after the Czechs became involved.

In November 1919, the last British forces in the Siberian intervention force withdrew from Vladivostok, completing the British participation in the Allied operation. The biggest supporters of Admiral Alexander V. Kolchak's liberal government in Siberia, the French and British left the fate of the counterrevolutionary in the hands of the Japanese. The final result was the collapse of Admiral Kolchak's government and military forces in December 1919.

Sometime in December, the United States decided to withdraw its troops from Siberia. Many contend that it was the collapse of Admiral Kolchak that forced the decision. On 9 January 1920, Washington

informed Japan of the impracticality of providing additional troops to stage an offensive against the Bolsheviks. The United States considered continued American participation in the Siberian intervention as impractical and announced its intent to withdraw:

...It will be recalled that the purpose of the expedition as originally conceived by the United States and expressed in an Aide-Mémoire...were, first, to help the Czecho-Slovak troops, which had, during their retirement along the Siberian railway, been attacked by the Bolsheviks and enemy prisoners of war in Siberia, to consolidate their forces and effect their repatriation by way of Vladivostok; and, second, to steady any efforts at self-government or self-defense in which the Russians themselves were engaged....⁷⁷

Included within the text was a note that the first American units would withdraw on 12 January. The short notice caused Japanese indignation and resentment, while it alarmed the Chinese. The Chinese saw the issue as one in which the Japanese would take advantage of the vacuum created by the Americans' withdrawal. The Japanese were pacified, and the fears of the Chinese confirmed, on 30 January when the United States supported Secretary Lansing's declaration to the Japanese that the Americans had no objection to Japan's plans to maintain troops in Siberia and to reinforce the security elements of the Trans-Siberian and Chinese Eastern Railways.⁷⁸

As the Americans were withdrawing their forces from Siberia, Admiral Kolchak and General Gaida, the former Czech commander who had joined the counterrevolutionaries, testified before Sessions of the Extraordinary Investigating Commission about the prisoners of war. Admiral Kolchak stated:

...The war is going on, the Bolshevik vanguard is in the Far East, more than half of it consists of Magyars and German units, all the German war prisoners are taking part on the Bolshevik side - I think therefore that I am carrying the war which we were fighting before and that it is in Japan's own interests to give me that small material help for which I asked....⁷⁹

On the 30th of January General Gaida agreed:

This is the continuation of the same war as before. The center of gravity of all these armed forces is the German and Magyar war prisoners. It is quite certain to me that this is the same war that has been carried on before and the Germans are undoubtedly taking part in this whole enterprise.⁸⁰

The role of the prisoners of war in the Russian situation was included in the final report submitted by General Tasker Bliss to the Supreme War Council on 19 February 1920. Bliss reaffirmed that the intervention was necessary to deal with the German and Austrian prisoner of war issue and to reestablish the eastern front.

The Americans remained in Vladivostok until a substantial number of the Czechs had embarked. On 1 April 1920, the last American contingents departed Siberia for the United States.⁸²

It was nearly two years after the armistice that the large-scale evacuation of prisoners began in Russia. The delay was attributed to the failure to open the border between Russia and Germany earlier. Less than one-half of the total number of captured war prisoners from the former Central Powers' nations could be accounted for to conduct a meaningful repatriation.⁸³

The general feeling of the American President Wilson concerning the United States' role in the Allied intervention in Russia can best be described by his comment to the President of the Council of the League of Nations in January, 1921: "...Armed invasion is not the way to bring peace to the people of Russia...Attempts at coercion can but end in disorder...."⁸⁴ This proved to be the case. The Russians will never forget the Allied intervention in north Russia and Siberia during the crucial period when the infant communist state was most vulnerable. Although most Americans have forgotten, or are totally ignorant of the

event, the memory of the Allied intervention continues to color Soviet relations with the United States.

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CONCLUSIONS

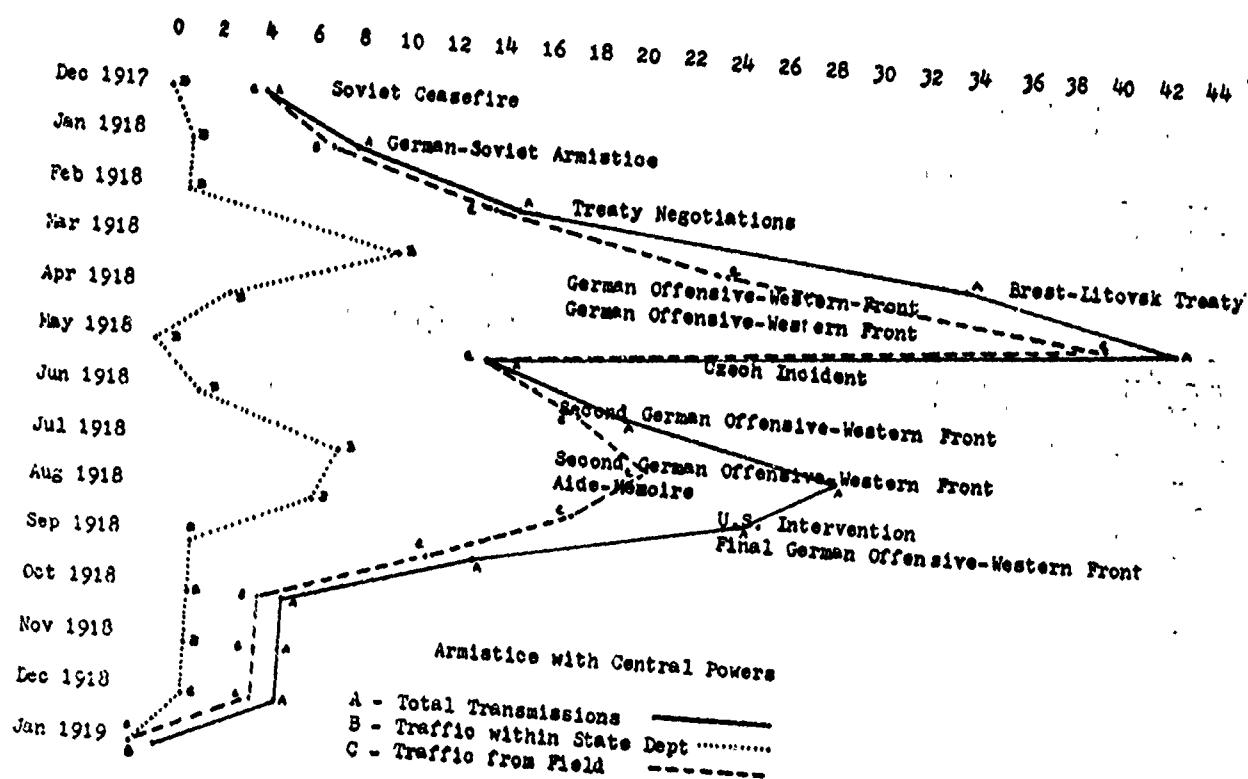
During the crucial months from December, 1917, through February, 1920, the total number of dispatches from the Russia series which specifically addressed the German and Austrian prisoner of war problem numbered about 228. The majority (189) were received from the field, and the remainder (39) were either sent from the Department of State to the field or were memoranda exchanged within Washington between Allied embassies or governmental agencies.

When quantified and categorized by month and year, the diplomatic message traffic clearly illustrates the impact of certain international events on monthly transmission frequencies. The graph (Appendix 1) illustrates the trends quite well. The numbers on the horizontal scale represent the transmissions on the prisoner of war issue either received by or dispatched from the State Department. The vertical scale indicates the month and year. Line "A" depicts total transmissions on the prisoner of war problem, while Line "B" represents only those transmissions which were sent by the Department of State or were transmitted within the Allied diplomatic community in Washington. Line "C" indicates field message traffic only. These line graphs not only provide quantitative analysis but also illustrate the influence of certain international events on monthly transmission volume.

Diplomatic message traffic during December 1917, discussed the Bolshevik delegation's trip to Brest-Litovsk to arrange an armistice with the Central Powers. The Russian-German armistice forced the Allies to consider the effects on the entire war effort of the unilateral peace

APPENDIX 1

GRAPH DEPICTING POW MESSAGE VOLUME
DECEMBER, 1917, THROUGH JANUARY, 1919



by the Russians. To many, the Bolshevik dissolution of the Constituent Assembly removed the final wrap which cloaked the anarchic regime of the Bolsheviks and doomed any chance for Allied recognition of the new government.

The message traffic increased in 1918 for several reasons. In January, the Bolsheviks began negotiating for a final peace settlement with the Central Powers, and the French sought to enlist the Czech forces in Russia to continue the fight on the western front. In February, the Bolsheviks received a peace proposal from the Central Powers, and the Ukrainians signed a separate peace with the Central Powers. In March, the Bolsheviks signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the French arranged for the safe passage of the Czechs from Russia, and the British landed forces in north Russia to guard the stockpiled war materials at Murmansk and Archangel, while the Germans launched their spring offensive on the western front. In April, the German spring offensive continued to place heavy pressure on the British and French troops on the western front, the Japanese and British landed troops in Vladivostok to restore and secure the Siberian stockpiles, and the Germans established the Commission for War Prisoner Repatriation in Moscow. In May, the Czechs resisted Bolshevik attempts to curtail their movement eastward. In June, the Germans launched their summer offensive on the western front, and the Czechs established control over the Trans-Siberian Railway from Penza to Vladivostok. In July, the summer offensive continued with substantial successes, the Supreme War Council sanctioned the Allied proposals for intervention in Russia; Count Mirbach, the German Ambassador to Russia, was murdered in Moscow; and the Americans held a White House Conference on the Russian problem and issued the Aide-Mémoire.

In August, the Americans landed forces in Vladivostok and north Russia to assist the Czechs, who were being attacked by German and Austrian war prisoners, and to guard the stockpiled war materials. Also during the month, the Japanese landed several divisions in Siberia, Lenin was wounded in an assassination attempt, and the Germans launched their final offensive on the western front. From September 1918, until the final troop withdrawals from Russia, the most significant event was the signing of the Allied armistice and the start of peace negotiations.

An analysis of the messages which deal with the prisoner of war issue demonstrates that this issue was the primary justification for America's decision to intervene in Russia in 1918. The message analysis also points out the roles played by various U.S. government officials in the development and implementation of America's policy towards Russia during 1917 and 1918. Finally, the analysis shows that diplomatic reports received from the field posts significantly influenced the final policy decisions, and that later these field diplomats affected the implementation of the policy in the areas where intervention took place.

The subject of prisoners of war in Russia was not new to the field diplomats nor to several key State Department officials in late 1917 and 1918. The Americans had assumed the humanitarian mission towards the German and Austrian war prisoners until United States entry in the war. Having dealt with the issue for some time, the field representatives were easily able to recognize the potential threat which nearly two million prisoners would pose if immediately repatriated by the Central Powers in early 1918. Movement of the prisoners towards Siberia by the Russians had been an ongoing process, especially when the German forces approached closer and closer to western Russia. Control of the

Trans-Siberian Railway was the key to transportation for all of Russia. The Americans more than willingly sent railway experts to Russia to assist in its operation. Certain disaster would result if the railway were seized by war prisoners, whose loyalties would undoubtedly be towards the Central Powers. Before the peace treaty, the war prisoners had been an exclusive pool for Allied recruiting which had resulted in the formation of Serbian and large Czechoslovak elements to fight the Central Powers. Plans for repatriation would open this heretofore exclusive pool to the Central Powers and would allow them to replenish depleted units, especially on the western front. Russian withdrawal from the war had already enabled the relocation of fifty German divisions from the eastern to western fronts.

For the remainder of the war after the Russian-German treaty, the Bolsheviks were considered by most Allies to be puppets of the Central Powers. The image of a pro-German regime which facilitated war prisoner repatriation caused the Allies to link all war prisoner activity with the Central Powers. The presence of large numbers of German military repatriation teams throughout Russia served to reinforce these attitudes. For many, final proof of German-Soviet complicity came with the Bolshevik attempts to curtail the movement of the Czech forces then enroute to Vladivostok for further evacuation to the western front. American attitudes in Washington were greatly influenced by the anti-Bolshevik sentiments possessed by the majority of the field diplomats. These sentiments coupled with a desire to restore liberalism to Russia led many of the field representatives to become early advocates of military intervention. In the eyes of most field reporters, war prisoners continued to be agents of their mother country, and all Bolshevik acts

were in support of the Central Powers.

Allied observers overlooked the complications involved in prisoner repatriation from Russia, or took their solutions for granted. The camps had been scattered throughout the country, but most were in Siberia, linked to European Russia only by the Trans-Siberian Railway. The chaotic conditions in Russia precluded the efficient movement of these prisoners from their camps. While German attention was focused primarily on the western front, the Bolsheviks capitalized on the war prisoner resources to develop a viable military force capable of establishing nominal control and dealing with the counterrevolutionary elements throughout Russia. Bolshevik propaganda teams worked relentlessly in the prisoner camps to recruit the former soldiers as Internationalists to fight against imperialism. The Germans were unable to control these recruiting drives, which resulted in the formation of a composite Red Guard force capable of dealing with most threats faced by the Soviets. The image of the Bolsheviks as German puppets was transmitted by Allied observers in Russia in messages which often exaggerated war prisoner activities. The arming of the war prisoners to serve in these Red Guards units increased the sense of alarm amongst the Allies, especially in Washington. Now, the potential threat had become a reality.

The Czechs, former war prisoners themselves, merely added to the confusion. When the Bolsheviks sought to prevent further movement of this suspected counterrevolutionary force until certain demands were met by the Czechs, the local Red Guards were called in to enforce the Moscow edict. Many of the Red Guards units were composed of Internationalists, which led to the belief that the Czechs were being attacked by armed war prisoners. Again, the armed war prisoners were associated with the

Central Powers. The Czechs did little to dispell the notion and seized control of the railroad and the cities nearby as self-defense measures. The Allies emphasized the humanitarian appeal of the Czech predicament to convince the Americans to join an Allied intervention in Russia. Tying the Czechs to the war prisoner threat expanded the issues sufficiently for the U.S. to rationalize a decision to intervene.

In their official statements, the Allies used the prisoner of war problem as their justification for intervention. The Japanese used the threat represented by the thousands of armed prisoners to support their plans to increase troop commitments in Siberia. The Supreme War Council emphasized the role of the war prisoners. From all sides, the policymakers in Washington were besieged by the prisoner of war issue until finally, once it was tied to the plight of the Czechs in Russia, it became the official American justification for intervention. It was much simpler to rationalize all hostile elements in Russia as being a single enemy, the Germans.

After the armistice was signed in November 1918, the United States supported the continuation of the intervention in Russia to protect the Czech elements threatened by the war prisoners. The armistice did not mark the cessation of a state of war against Germany, hence the efforts against Russia continued. It was only after the Czechs were aboard ship that the Americans completed their troop evacuations from Russia. Despite this, the major counterrevolutionary groups in Russia perpetuated the myth of the war prisoner threat to justify the continuation of Allied support for their efforts. In the end the war prisoners in Russia served all sides. They acted as propaganda agents for the Germans and then the Bolsheviks. They provided manpower for the

Bolsheviks, the Allies, and the counterrevolutionaries. Finally, they justified American intervention and continued Allied support for the White Armies fighting the Bolsheviks in Russia.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 2

Memorandum of the Secretary of State of a Conference at the
White House in Reference to the Siberian Situation

July 6, 1918.

Present: The President, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of War, the Secretary of the Navy, General March, and Admiral Benson.

After debating the whole subject of the present conditions in Siberia as affected by the taking of Vladivostok by the Czecho-Slovaks, the landing of American, British, French, and Japanese forces from the naval vessels in that port, and the occupation of the railroad through western Siberia by other Czecho-Slovaks with the reported taking of Irkutsk by these troops; and after reading and discussing the communication of the Supreme War Council favoring an attempt to restore an eastern front against the Central powers; and also a memorandum by the Secretary of State —

The following propositions and program were decided upon:

- (1) That the establishment of an eastern front through a military expedition, even if it was wise to employ a large Japanese force, is physically impossible though the front was established east of the Ural Mountains.
- (2) That under present conditions any advance westward of Irkutsk does not seem possible and needs no further consideration;
- (3) That the present situation of the Czecho-Slovaks requires this Government and other governments to make an effort to aid those at Vladivostok in forming a junction with their compatriots in western Siberia; and that this Government on sentimental grounds and because of the effect upon the friendly Slavs everywhere would be subject to criticism if it did not make this effort and would doubtless be held responsible if they were defeated by lack of such effort;
- (4) That in view of the inability of the United States to furnish any considerable force within a short time to assist the Czecho-Slovaks the following plan of operations should be adopted, provided the Japanese Government agrees to cooperate;
 - (a) The furnishing of small arms, machine guns, and ammunition to the Czecho-Slovaks at Vladivostok by the Japanese Government; this Government to share the

expense and to supplement the supplies as rapidly as possible;

- (b) The assembling of a military force at Vladivostok composed of approximately 7,000 Americans and 7,000 Japanese to guard the line of communication of the Czecho-Slovaks proceeding toward Irkutsk; the Japanese to send troops at once;
- (c) The landing of available forces from the American and Allied naval vessels to hold possession of Vladivostok and cooperate with the Czecho-Slovaks;
- (d) The public announcement by this and Japanese Governments that the purpose of landing troops is to aid Czecho-Slovaks against German and Austrian prisoners, that there is no purpose to interfere with internal affairs of Russia, and that they guarantee not to impair the political or territorial sovereignty of Russia; and
- (e) To await further developments before taking further steps.

[File copy not signed]

APPENDIX 3

The Secretary of State to the Allied Ambassadors

AIDE-MEMOIRE

The whole heart of the people of the United States is in the winning of this war. The controlling purpose of the Government of the United States is to do everything that is necessary and effective to win it. It wishes to cooperate in every practicable way with the Allied Governments, and to cooperate ungrudgingly; for it has no ends of its own to serve and believes that the war can be won only by common counsel and intimate concert of action. It has sought to study every proposed policy or action in which its cooperation has been asked in this spirit, and states the following conclusions in the confidence that, if it finds itself obliged to decline participation in any undertaking or course of action, it will be understood that it does so only because it deems itself precluded from participating by imperative considerations either of policy or of fact.

In full agreement with the Allied Governments and upon the unanimous advice of the Supreme War Council, the Government of the United States adopted, upon its entrance into the war, a plan for taking part in the fighting on the western front into which all its resources of men and material were to be put, and put as rapidly as possible, and it has carried out that plan with energy and success, pressing its execution more and more rapidly forward and literally putting into it the entire energy and executive force of the nation. This was its response, its very willing and hearty response, to what was the unhesitating judgment alike of its own military advisers and of the advisers of the Allied Governments. It is now considering, at the suggestion of the Supreme War Council, the possibility of making very considerable additions even to this immense program which, if they should prove feasible at all, will tax the industrial processes of the United States and the shipping facilities of the whole group of associated nations to the utmost. It has thus concentrated all its plans and all its resources upon this single absolutely necessary object.

In such circumstances it feels it to be its duty to say that it cannot, so long as the military situation on the western front remains critical, consent to break or slacken the force of its present effort by diverting any part of its military force to other points or objectives. The United States is at a great distance from the field of action on the western front; it is at a much greater distance from any other field of action. The instrumentalities by which it is to handle its armies and its stores have at great cost and with great difficulty been created in France. They do not exist elsewhere. It is practicable for her to do a great deal in France; it is not practicable for her to do anything of importance or on a large scale upon any other field. The American Government, therefore, very respectfully requests its associates to accept

its deliberate judgment that it should not dissipate its force by attempting important operations elsewhere.

It regards the Italian front as closely coordinated with the western front, however, and is willing to divert a portion of its military forces from France to Italy if it is the judgment and wish of the Supreme Command that it should do so. It wishes to defer to the decision of the Commander in Chief in this matter, as it would wish to defer in all others, particularly because it considers these two fronts so closely related as to be practically but separate parts of a single line and because it would be necessary that any American troops sent to Italy should be subtracted from the number used in France and be actually transported across French territory from the ports now used by the armies of the United States.

It is the clear and fixed judgment of the Government of the United States, arrived at after repeated and very searching reconsiderations of the whole situation in Russia, that military intervention there would add to the present sad confusion in Russia rather than cure it, injure her rather than help her, and that it would be of no advantage in the prosecution of our main design, to win the war against Germany. It can not, therefore, take part in such intervention or sanction it in principle. Military intervention would, in its judgment, even supposing it to be efficacious in its immediate avowed object of delivering an attack upon Germany from the east, be merely a method of making use of Russia, not a method of serving her. Her people could not profit by it, if they profited by it at all, in time to save them from their present distresses, and their substance would be used to maintain foreign armies, not to reconstitute their own. Military action is admissible in Russia, as the Government of the United States sees the circumstances, only to help the Czecho-Slovaks consolidate their forces and get into successful cooperation with their Slavic kinsmen and to steady any efforts at self-government or self-defense in which the Russians themselves may be willing to accept assistance. Whether from Vladivostok or from Murmansk and Archangel, the only legitimate object for which American or Allied troops can be employed, it submits, is to guard military stores which may subsequently be needed by Russian forces and to render such aid as may be acceptable to the Russians in the organization of their own self-defense. For helping the Czecho-Slovaks there is immediate necessity and sufficient justification. Recent developments have made it evident that that is in the interest of what the Russian people themselves desire, and the Government of the United States is glad to contribute the small force at its disposal for that purpose. It yields, also, to the judgment of the Supreme Command in the matter of establishing a small force at Murmansk, to guard the military stores at Kola, and to make it safe for Russian forces to come together in organized bodies in the north. But it owes it to frank counsel to say that it can go no further than these modest and experimental plans. It is not in a position, and has no expectation of being in a position, to take part in organized intervention in adequate force from either Vladivostok or Murmansk and Archangel. It feels that it ought to add, also, that it will feel at liberty to use the few troops it can spare only for the purposes here stated and shall feel obliged to withdraw those forces, in order to add them to the forces at the western front, if the plans in whose execution it is now intended that they should

cooperate should develop into others inconsistent with the policy to which the Government of the United States feels constrained to restrict itself.

At the same time the Government of the United States wishes to say with the utmost cordiality and good will that none of the conclusions here stated is meant to wear the least color of criticism of what the other governments associated against Germany may think it wise to undertake. It wishes in no way to embarrass their choices of policy. All that is intended here is a perfectly frank and definite statement of the policy which the United States feels obliged to adopt for herself and in the use of her own military forces. The Government of the United States does not wish it to be understood that in so restricting its own activities it is seeking, even by implication, to set limits to the action or to define the policies of its associates.

It hopes to carry out the plans for safeguarding the rear of the Czecho-Slovaks operating from Vladivostok in a way that will place it and keep it in close cooperation with a small military force like its own from Japan, and if necessary from the other Allies, and that will assure it of the cordial accord of all the Allied powers; and it proposes to ask all associated in this course of action to unite in assuring the people of Russia in the most public and solemn manner that none of the governments uniting in action either in Siberia or in northern Russia contemplates any interference of any kind with the political sovereignty of Russia, any intervention in her internal affairs, or any impairment of her territorial integrity either now or hereafter, but that each of the associated powers has the single object of affording such aid as shall be acceptable, and only such aid as shall be acceptable, to the Russian people in their endeavor to regain control of their own affairs, their own territory, and their own destiny.

It is the hope and purpose of the Government of the United States to take advantage of the earliest opportunity to send to Siberia a commission of merchants, agricultural experts, labor advisers, Red Cross representatives, and agents of the Young Men's Christian Association accustomed to organizing the best methods of spreading useful information and rendering educational help of a modest sort, in order in some systematic manner to relieve the immediate economic necessities of the people there in every way for which opportunity may open. The execution of this plan will follow and will not be permitted to embarrass the military assistance rendered in the rear of the westward-moving forces of the Czecho-Slovaks.

WASHINGTON, July 17, 1918.

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